

SPECIALITY FOOD

NEWS, COMMENT AND BUYING IDEAS FOR FINE FOOD RETAILERS

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Rocco Tanzarella



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AWARDS



MAX SCOTFORD,
BULLION CHOCOLATE:
MEET OUR SUPREME
CHAMPION P.14

INTERVIEW



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FOR THE LOVE OF
CHOCOLATE P.24

CHEESE



AMI DEANE,
TYNE CHEESE:
THE RISE OF
VEGANISM P.35

Traditional artisan Panettone, handcrafted by Rocco Tanzarella La Bottega del Pane, London



Dough placed onto worktop



Dough is cut



Panettone is ready



Panettone is baked

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Dough is separated



The Panettone are placed into individual portions



Panettone is placed into the casing



The dough is moulded

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Welcome to the November/December issue of *Speciality Food*.

It's been a busy year for the *Speciality Food* team, and the New Producer Awards 2018 have been a highlight for me personally. It's so gratifying to see some of the brightest food and drink entrepreneurs of today come face to face with industry experts who can change their professional lives, and, having spoken with the winners since the final in early October, I'm delighted to announce that valuable relationships have already been forged. You can meet the winners on p. 14.

The year still has plenty of excitement and innovation to come, courtesy of Food Matters Live at the end of November – well worth a trip if you're looking for a taste of the future of food. Preview on p. 22.

In this issue you'll also find an ode to Italian food in the UK (p. 26), as well as a look at trends in hot drinks (p. 32) and storecupboard staples (p. 40). See you next year!

Holly

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Global warming: how it's affecting the UK food scene

With a record-breaking hot summer on the coat tails of a record-breaking cold winter, British crops have been put through serious strain

We know that the agriculture places a burden on the planet – with the sector accounting for 21 per cent of global CO₂ emissions from 2000 to 2010 – but the impacts have come full circle, with climate change having a destructive effect on farming. Last December saw temperatures falling as low as -15°C in the UK, while the summer experienced regular thirty degree temperatures. Scientists say it is too early to confirm the exact effects man-made climate change has on the planet, but they widely agree that climate change played a part in the summer's heatwave. With summer harvests now at an end, producers are able to take stock of the damage and gain an understanding for how this will affect the wider food industry.

As discussed in the October issue of *Speciality Food*, many crops have suffered ill effects due to the

summer's drought: wheat, potatoes, onions and feed for livestock to name a few. These and more are yielding a shorter supply, which gives rise to several pressing concerns, from reduced availability and affordability of key staples to the UK becoming reliant on European imports at the expense of British farmers.

DOWNSIZING ON POTATOES

Potatoes have been hit hard, with fears of crisp shortages looking to become a reality. According to the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board's strategy director for potatoes, Rob Clayton, planting is down 3% from the previous year due to struggles with drilling through the wet spring. This reduction is equal to around 180,000 tonnes of potatoes, plus the heatwave has resulted in a smaller yield, which exacerbates the problem. While the UK is over 95% self-sufficient in fresh

potatoes and 50% self-sufficient in processed potatoes, turning its gaze outward may not be a possibility, and not just out of pride.

TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF

UK lettuce growers have borne the brunt of the heatwave, and even in spite of the arrival of late summer rainfall, the British Leafy Salads Association reports that the crop has struggled. This is because lettuce is put under immense stress with hot, dry weather, and is unable to grow at temperatures above 30°C. However, despite signalling tougher times ahead for lettuce growers – with further extreme weather expected in years to come – other salad leaves are far more resistant to such conditions and may become a viable alternative in our climate-challenged times. Watercress is a good example: aptly named, it grows in flowing spring water and is usually sourced from

stable, reliable aquifers underground, meaning that the temperature is lower and it can keep crops cool.

RIPE FOR CHANGE

The National Farmers' Union (NFU) recently hit out at the government for "failing to act" on promises made by Michael Gove earlier this year to "ease the immediate pressure on farmers". NFU president Minette Batters argued that, compared to efforts by devolved governments in Scotland and Wales, England was failing to provide "meaningful assistance" to farmers to cope with long-term impacts of drought. As global warming looks set to incite further extreme weather, how can the government work with farmers to ensure consistent food supply?

For Tim Benton, professor of population ecology and global food security expert at Leeds University, "it's not simply about developing

drought-resistant crops". He outlines how weather is likely to become more variable and unpredictable, especially if there is a step change in the Gulf Stream, which will mean a plunging of temperatures across Europe and a serious decrease in agricultural production. There is a need for long-term forecasting, efficient irrigation methods, development of GM crops and an increased range of crops planted among other potential solutions. But, these will only come to fruition if backed by funding and policy, so it is crucial that the government recognise the potential havoc that weather extremes can wreak, and act fast.

As trends are increasingly driven by millennials' demand for eco-friendly options – with a recent Unilever study revealing that a third of consumers prefer sustainable brands – perhaps it's the next logical step that consumers will start opting for food crops that can thrive in spite of climate change. But as many British farmers are faced with lower yields and poorer-quality produce, relying on consumer habits is not enough – the government need to make concerted effort to support initiatives which help farmers cope with the effects of climate change. Until then, farmers will have to reap the impacts from climate change that the agricultural sector has been sowing for many years.

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JOHN SHEPHERD OF PARTRIDGES



“A shop for all seasons”

As we retailers are just about to enter our busiest season, “it is a truth universally acknowledged” that there are not only Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Four Colly Birds and the Four Tops but also Four Seasons in every year.

Except that using meteorological divisions does not cover all the bases when running a food shop. A strict definition of the word ‘season’ would say that it is a time characterized by a particular circumstance or feature, and there are certainly more than four of these for the speciality food retailer to think about. To my mind there are probably six, based along the following lines...

Season One in the Speciality Food Box Set for me would be the 58-day period of January and February. For us these two months contribute about 14% of the annual sales. This season is all about the brutality of winter and a time for a lot of basic work behind the scenes. There is not much material to make an event. In February there is the double positive of Shrove Tuesday and Valentine’s Day, where there is a short lived upsurge in spending, but it’s a blessing when St David’s Day on 1st March ushers in spring and Season 2.

Season Two is the 61 day period of March and April, otherwise known as spring, and which accounts for about 16.5% of our sales. It is often a period of confusion in customer counts as the school holidays collide with Paschal Calendars. St George’s Day falls into this period, though it has never been particularly successful for us and the weather can be somewhat volatile. But spirits and sales are heading in an upward direction.

Season Three is the longest season of the year. The 76 days of May, June and the first two weeks of July account for over 20% of the year’s sales. It’s all singing and dancing and the boulevard lifestyle for us. Good weather, picnics, sporting events, dining al fresco, cultural events, royal events, the Chelsea Flower Show and two Bank Holidays – as mentioned before, it’s the Goldilocks Zone for speciality food.

Season Four is late summer – the 47 day period between the middle of July and the end of August. The shortest of the six and which provides just 8.5% of the annual turnover. The late yang to early summer’s ying. Characterised by holidays and closed schools and out of office replies and the fact that many wallets have migrated abroad. It’s the last chance for us to see if the Christmas catalogue is in-hand and we haven’t forgotten the panettone order.

Season Five is – you guessed it – autumn. The season of mists and missed opportunities. It’s The Quiet Beatle of the seasons, the one that gets away. I always feel we should be doing better than we do. The schools are back, the weather can be good, the holidays have refreshed customers but there is no focal point. We need a “Day” to liven things up. A modern take on Harvest Festival perhaps or a national celebration of food.

Season Six is finally the big one. Christmas starts on 1st November. Decorative lights are switched on, displays go up, stock arrives and the rest is social science. These two months or 61 days contribute to over 22% of our sales. Black Friday was the day traditionally regarded as the start of the period when retailers become profitable for the first time in the year. Let’s hope we all make it.

Food Matters Live Awards 2018: finalists announced

The second year of the Food Matters Live Awards saw an array of businesses showcase innovative product development, ground-breaking science and technology, and sustainable practices that can have a far-reaching impact.

A panel of 24 expert judges from across the food and drink industry assessed and tasted each product, and the winners will be announced on 21st November at 16:45 in the

conference theatre at Food Matters Live.

Briony Mansell-Lewis, Food Matters Live director said, “We are delighted to welcome so many entrants of such high quality to the second edition of these Awards from Food Matters Live. The entries reflect the breadth of innovation that is happening across the food and drink industry in the quest to meet consumer demand for healthy, better-for-you food and drink.

“Congratulations to all the finalists who have been nominated by the judges in recognition of their distinctive and innovative approach.”

The fifth edition of Food Matters Live is taking place at ExCeL London on 20th-22nd November 2018. The event is free to attend if you pre-register – you can do so via the website, foodmatterslive.com.

For the full list of finalists, visit specialityfoodmagazine.com



Industry leaders launch local food and drink fund

Suffolk Community Foundation, one of 46 located across the UK with the aim of supporting a range of philanthropic and charitable causes, has joined forces with local food and drink leaders to launch the Food & Drink Fund: an endeavour focused on aiding the county’s most deprived communities.

Judy Dow, head of philanthropy at Suffolk Community Foundation said, “Deprivation goes beyond income and includes other forms of disadvantage, including food poverty.” Paddy Bishopp, chair of the Food and Drink Fund continues, “As a large rural county, food, drink and agriculture are important to Suffolk’s economy,

with agriculture employing over 10,000 people, and food and drink processing employing a further 9,000 people.

“The aim of the Food and Drink Fund is to support charitable activities addressing local needs, particularly those where there is a direct link with food and drink. The Fund will support charities, voluntary and community groups throughout Suffolk through a small grants programme.”

Beneficiaries of the fund so far include REACH Community Projects, Greener Growth CIC and Stour Valley Vineyard Church.

For more information on the fund, and to find out how to get involved, visit suffolkfoodanddrink.co.uk.

Budget 2018: industry reacts

Chancellor Philip Hammond has made his Budget statement – the final announcement before Brexit comes into effect – elements of which may come as a relief to high streets, entrepreneurs and rural businesses.

Andy Melia, head of place and impact at Business in the Community said, “Today’s announcement by the Chancellor will come as a relief to the UK’s high streets, as well as the communities based around them. The cut in business rates for firms with a rateable value below £50,000 will also be welcome news to Britain’s 5.7 million small businesses, who are the backbone of communities around the country.”

Minette Batters, president of NFU said, “The announcement today that the National Living Wage will increase by 4.9% is substantially more than the sector expected and comes at a time when farm businesses are faced with a rising cost base. We will continue to engage with the Low Pay Commission on this issue.”

Mike Cooper, partner at Moore Stephens said, “Extending the qualifying period means the Chancellor is effectively forcing businesses to plan further ahead, but the continued Brexit uncertainty makes that more risky.”

What's in store at Scotland's Speciality Food Show 2019?

A joint effort between Scotland’s Food Show in Glasgow and the Speciality Food Show in Edinburgh, the show will take place at Glasgow’s SEC 20th-22nd January.

One of the show’s features is the Launch Gallery, which uses a different stand fitting system to allow it to stand out in the show and is subsidised by the show to lower entry barriers for young companies, with the aim of giving a platform to innovative new companies to showcase their products. This year’s event will feature an

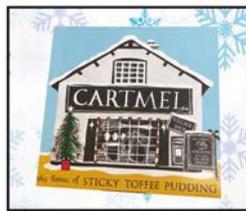
extended area to account for the increasing number of start-ups out there.

The show promises not only hundreds of stands of high quality Scottish food and drink, but has multiple events scheduled throughout in the Seminar Theatre, from workshops and seminars to talk, all proffering advice from experts about the industry. As always, the show will present the well-received Best Product Awards.

According to Mark Saunders, show director, “Demand for stands at Scotland’s Speciality Food

Show is high, with a great range of producers and most notably regional food and drinks stands, such as The Shetland Islands, The Orkney Isles and Invest Northern Ireland. This year Tuesday will be dedicated to the Food Show with many extra activities, such as a *Dragons’ Den*-style session and other foodie seminars. Following the rare good weather this summer and swarms of tourists, food outlets across Scotland will be in a good position to re-stock and search out those gems that their customers will love.”

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CHARLES CAMPION



“Watch out or the Krampus will get you”

Christmas is just around the corner but it's a fair bet that even the most fervent Brexit remainers are unlikely to be including Krampusnacht in their calculations. Throughout Central Europe the Krampus plays an important role in Christmas frivolities. In Britain smiley old Santa Claus rewards boys and girls who have been good with toys and gifts. On the Continent the emphasis is different; if you have been wicked during the year gone by the Krampus will punish you. The Krampus is Saint Nic's wingman and he's an anthropomorphic figure described as "half goat, half demon, horned and hairy, carrying chains". On Krampusnacht (the day before the festival of Saint Nicholas) the youths in any self-respecting Alpine town don Krampus fancy dress and take part in a night time fun run. It's all a bit moody but the greetings card sellers will do a handy line in Krampuskarten, while the drink of choice for spectators is a punishingly high octane fruit schnapps.

Recently Nathan Pelletier (an eggs-pert ecological economist working at the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus and funded by the Egg Farmers of Canada) addressed a weighty question: why don't we eat more turkey eggs? For North Americans the turkey market is strongest at Thanksgiving and then steadies over the Christmas period. Where there are turkeys there are turkey eggs. Pelletier suggests that the reason for chicken dominance may be primarily

about profitability – turkeys take up more space, eat more and don't lay eggs as regularly as chickens. Nevertheless, eggs of all kinds provide relatively cheap protein. Following the quail's egg boom – it seems that every pub menu in Britain features miniature quail egg scotch eggs – perhaps we should investigate less obvious options? A goose egg omelette is a large and sustaining dish. Duck eggs have long been a favourite with cake bakers for their intensely orange yolks. From a culinary point of view the most exotic and expensive eggs are gull's eggs – if you exclude caviar! The gull's eggs are very rich, in very short supply and with a lamentably short season. They are gathered on the marshes of the south coast and are then snapped up by smart traditional restaurants.

Who would argue that 2019 will see some big issues homing in on the food and drink industry. The current hot fave is cannabis. Autumn saw the mega corporations quietly going about their business. A succession of stock market raids in America saw drinks heavy hitters concentrating on buying into Canadian cannabis companies. It seems that everyone wants in just before various forms of weed are legalised for both medical and recreational use. Coca-Cola bought billions of shares in cannabis producers while Diageo was also active in the market. Coca-Cola are probably even now working on a medical soft drink which is somewhat a full circle as that is where they started when the company made a drink that teamed cocaine and cola nuts. Refreshing!

What's new in speciality food?

Compiling research results from 230 independent speciality food and drink businesses, the Speciality Market Report – commissioned by events business and founders of the Speciality & Fine Food Fair, Fresh Montgomery – paints a picture of the speciality food and drink scene.

BREXIT

Commissioned in early September at the Speciality & Fine Food Fair, one of the report's primary findings indicates the budding growth of the UK online market. As always, Brexit plays into the shape of the industry, with fears of wholesale prices being driven up once the UK leaves the EU. 56% of independents think this will happen, which may end up driving up the prices of food and drink on the customer side of things. 32% of these businesses said they would pass the

entire rise onto shoppers, and an additional 47% said they would pass at least a portion of it. Reactions to the impending exit vary, with 30% of respondents already seeking new UK sources of products while 50% said they had no immediate plans to change their business.

E-COMMERCE

When it comes to changing and adapting business, the internet has proven successful. Online platforms have been shown to help sellers boost their profits, with 75% of respondents who took to e-commerce reporting higher volumes of sales and of new customer attraction. Over 50% of these reported sales rises of up to 9%, but the impact of online retail can be even greater. 15% indicated that sales had increased over 40% in the last year and a half since going online.

Positive figures notwithstanding, not all businesses have embraced digital platforms. 53% of independent retailers and caterers said they don't sell online, with 35% of these stating they do not intend to make any move online. Whatever the reason for eschewing the virtual option, modern shopping habits indicate that if businesses don't follow the trend they will miss out on a large customer pool. Going online is not, inherently, a rejection of the brick-and-mortar store. Here at Speciality Food, we've spoken to a few companies that provide for both online and offline platforms; they've said that, while the virtual option has bolstered sales, that is separate from their audience for brick-and-mortar stores and they cater to each accordingly.

DIVERSIFICATION

There are other options for businesses to appeal to new customer groups than the internet. Diversification has proven a successful technique for modern businesses, with 68% of surveyed businesses saying they diversified with options such as opening an in-store café, offering free Wifi, and hosting tastings or talks by industry specialists. 36% of the diversified businesses have reported "significantly" increased sales.

Soraya Gadelrab, event director of Speciality & Fine Food Fair said, "While our research highlights areas where businesses could be capitalising more, it also paints a picture of how entrepreneurial our industry is. Owners are not content to sit back, but can see the enormous benefits of offering their customers experiences that are just not possible in a typical high-street retailer or coffee-shop. We believe the report offers revealing insights into the day-to-day workings of this multi-billion-pound market that we hope everyone will find useful to their own businesses, especially when it comes to planning for 2019 and beyond."



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Margins squeezed as price war escalates

In a bid to win over today's shoppers, supermarkets have lowered the price of their food, putting the brunt of the consequences on food producers.

UK food producers are now facing payment delays of 45 days on average, up one day from the previous year according to research by Funding Options. By lowering their prices, supermarkets are put in a situation where they continue to delay payment to suppliers, without paying interest upon what is essentially an over-extended loan.

With bank borrowing rates for SMEs of 6% above base compound, or around 20% per annum, many independents have no other options but to work paycheck to paycheck. Delayed payments have serious consequences on these businesses' financial stability, particularly those in from small to medium business that depend on a tight turnover and already work with thin margins. Across all sectors, BIS reports that £30 billion is overdue to SMEs because of late payments.

Initiatives and legislation to combat this have been put in place. Many of the largest supermarkets in the UK including Tesco, Asda, and Sainsbury's have signed the Prompt-Payment Code, which sets up a target of 30 days for signers to pay their suppliers. The European Commission (EC) draft for Unfair Trading Practices (UTP) highlights the need for restrictions and prohibitions on certain trading

practices within the food supply chain to support SMEs. But still food producers find their payments being continually delayed and research from the Intrum states that a majority of these late payments are deliberate.

According to Paul Gregory, consultant at Food Solutions, the only UK representative in the food sector at the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME), these initiatives need to broaden their scope. Gregory says, "The new draft EC Directive on Unfair Trading Practices throws a cannonball into supermarket supplier payment, enforcing maximum 30 day net payment for fresh food suppliers. The UEAPME (representing 13 million SMEs in Europe, and the only body authorised by the EC to represent small business) response asks for the whole of the food chain to be covered." The EC draft for UTP focuses exclusively on the role of supermarkets, but the UEAPME insists it cover everyone from distributors to late-paying retailers. Research by HMG found that despite public authorities paying main contractors, 73% of subcontractors receive their bills late, and many distributors ask for 60-80 days credit, often unsustainable for a small business.

According to a report by Food Solutions, 90% of food businesses are MSME. The push of long term credit onto these businesses has negative

effects all around. Intrum's 2018 European Payment Report found that over 40% of businesses said they suffered liquidity problems because of late payments. "When a business is liquidated by reason of late payment," states Intrum in a past report, "the directors lose their capital, and they and other employees become dependent on the state for support, and contribute nothing to the economy." The longer credit terms can come to affect the consumer by way of higher prices on products, since suppliers may have to increase costs to make ends meet. Of course, businesses suffer, either unable to meet the demands of distributors and thus denied market access, or unable to dispute unfair terms being smaller organisations than their counterparts.

Professionals in the industry have underlined the effect that a 30-day bill payment would have, one cheesemaker stating it would enable them to double both their turnover and their employment. While it is a problem that needs to be solved, in the meantime, there are other options for SMEs. Conrad Ford, CEO at Funding Options, states, "Food producers are suffering from longer waits for payment as the supermarkets wage a price war amongst each other. Even with Government initiatives such as the Prompt Payment Code, we are increasingly seeing food producers suffering from cashflow issues as a result of late payments. It is vital that producers understand the options available to minimise the impact of late payment by freeing up the funds they require. There is a wide range of choices out there for businesses seeking funding, such as invoice finance, asset finance, crowdfunding and peer-to-peer lending."



RICHARD HORWELL,
BRAND RELATIONS

"Food and drink today"

I was shocked just how many new products applied for the New Producer Awards and Dragon's Den at Bread & Jam, there were literally hundreds. The sad thing is that many of these won't be around in 12 months time, as there simply just isn't the space for all of them. One area that I am not sure anyone saw coming is vegan; previously limited to a lettuce leaf and a glass of water, now a vegan has an incredible array of choices and you don't need to be vegan to appreciate them.

The UK seems to be producing more entrepreneurs than ever before. In my day, getting a job with a big company like a bank for life was a dream come true, now it seems the dream is to have your own business, and food and drink seems to be top of the list. The biggest challenge is getting past just being a start-up. Just because an idea appeals to friends and family doesn't make it a mainstream product, and unless you get past the stage of selling it to your local shops then it's pretty well impossible to make a living. Most big brands don't make any money for the first two years so unless you have the potential to be on the shelf on the high street then it may be best not to give up your day job. There is a huge difference between a hobby and a business and I have seen a LOT of products that, unfortunately, were never going to be anything other than just a niche idea.

Drinks and healthy snacking seem to be the craze at present, and everything is designed to make eating healthier, easier and quicker. Phrases like 'deskfast' mean you spend less time eating and more time working, therefore, brands are cashing in on this. There is a vast selection available from either your local café or delivered

directly to your office and consumers are busier than ever, many eating the most important meal of the day on the move. Buzzwords seem to be plant mylks and foods, nuts and seeds, protein, vegetables and sugar-free or low calories. Some brands try to be everything to everyone resulting in something that doesn't taste nice but ticks all the boxes; consumers buy for health, return for taste, remember that!

Moving onto drinks; not so long ago everyone saw Stevia as the saviour to sugar which is considered the devil, now consumers are starting to realise Stevia tastes horrible and despite all the masking products the taste still comes through. Therefore, it's good to see drinks with some sweetness from fruit juice – but even then, in my opinion, drinks innovation recently has been quite dull. If there is no functionality to a drink then why not drink water?

Snacks; this area is turning into 'white noise'. Between healthy snacking and protein it is just a blur of brands of all different shapes and sizes, all making obscure claims and to be honest not tasting that great. Both these areas will see a lot of condensing as too much choice is not a good thing – consumers would rather not buy at all than spend ages making a choice.

There are some interesting times ahead. Many brands are based in Europe so maybe Brexit will price them out of the market. However, whatever happens with the economy I feel certain new brands will keep popping up backed by innovative, energetic young entrepreneurs that would rather work seven days a week, 12 hours a day than be a wage slave.

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HOW CAN INDIES MAKE THE MOST OF MOOD FOOD?

Nearly one in three (29%) of us will suffer from SAD (seasonal affective disorder) syndrome – lethargy and low mood brought on by a reduction in light. So autumn's the time to promote and stock food and drink that lifts the spirits.

Could you put pick-me-up drinks or high protein snacks on your mood-boosting café or restaurant menu? How about flagging up mood-boosting products in-store?

WHOSE PRODUCTS SHOULD I STOCK?

Busy Botanist herbal teas attracted a lot of attention at September's Speciality & Fine Food Fair. The southwest Ireland-based company was founded by a veterinary herbalist. There are brews for when you're feeling blue, stressed out or need a pick-me-up.

While some of us toss and turn, others feel like hibernating when winter comes. Using coffee to keep us alert can lead to anxiety if we drink too much. That's why many new product launches involve natural pick-me-ups for mental focus such as matcha, mate, ginger and turmeric.

Matcha Now health drinks offer your customers a peaceful sustained energy boost. Tea Rex fresh fruit and root infusions won a Great Taste Award and include a variant called Wakey Wakey containing turmeric, ginger and lemongrass. Or how about Virtue Energy Water? It contains the same amount of caffeine (80mg) as a cup of coffee from natural sources including yerba mate, guarana and ginseng.

WILL THE TREND LAST?

We think so, as food that lifts mood is part of a larger trend for food with health benefits. Who wouldn't want to feel alert and happy? As long as British winters remain cold, wet, dark and depressing, we need all the help we can get.

MOOD FOOD

Over half (57%) of adults say their mood is worse during winter. Exciting new research suggests food can make a difference, says Sally-Jayne Wright

Have you noticed how cookery writers are linking food and mood? This winter, there's a new cookbook called *Happy Food: How Eating Well Can Lift Your Mood and Bring you Joy* (Absolute Press) by Niklas Ekstedt and Henrik Ennart and also *Eat Happy: 30-minute Feel-good Food* (Penguin) by Melissa Hemsley. At London cocktail bar, Barts, there are cocktails called Happiness and Relax.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE TREND?

Authors and bartenders choose the words 'happy' and 'relax' deliberately because they're the opposite of 'sad' and 'anxious'. Overuse of anti-depressants and poor mental health are very topical. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), depression

will be the leading illness globally by 2030 if we don't act fast.

HOW HAS THIS IMPACTED HEALTH PROMISES ON FOOD PACKAGING?

They mention mental wellbeing. The protein and vitamin smoothies made by Upbeat Drinks "are scientifically proven to ... support your mental performance". Jujube Fruit snacks from Abakus Foods contain phytonutrients to 'help calm the mind, improve sleep and uplift the mood'.

WHAT'S THE MOST INTERESTING USE OF MOOD FOOD YOU'VE SEEN?

Monarch Airlines launched a mood food menu to help passengers feel calmer during flights. The Mood Food box includes green tea and lavender cakes to improve relaxation.

YOU MENTIONED NEW RESEARCH EARLIER...?

Yes, scientists have found links between how we feel and our

gut bacteria. We're born with trillions of good and bad bugs in our tummies – our so-called microbiome. They like variety and what we eat affects the ratio of good to bad bacteria. A monotonous diet of sugary, processed foods is associated with reduced diversity of gut microbes and some long-term health conditions including Crohn's disease, obesity and even depression.

IS THIS WHY FERMENTED FOODS HAVE BECOME SO POPULAR?

Yes. Yoghurt, kefir, kombucha and pickles are good because they contain probiotics or beneficial bacteria.

IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE THOUGH, IS IT?

No, we have a great deal still to learn. Some experts say the pasteurised, sweetened kefir and heat-treated pickles found in supermarkets are less effective than live, active, traditionally fermented foods. Health journalist, Henrik Ennart, writes in *Happy Food* that there's no

good science linking kombucha to gut health.

BUT CUSTOMERS BELIEVE THESE PRODUCTS WORK, DON'T THEY?

Right. Think of the success of Actimel and the number of people who claim to experience 'that Actimel feeling'. In September, the Coca-Cola drinks company bought the Mojo kombucha business – a sure sign they're expecting fermented tea to be successful or want a stake in it just in case.

NEVER MIND MICRO-BIOMES AND GUT MICROBES, WE'D BE LESS MOODY IF WE GOT ENOUGH SLEEP...

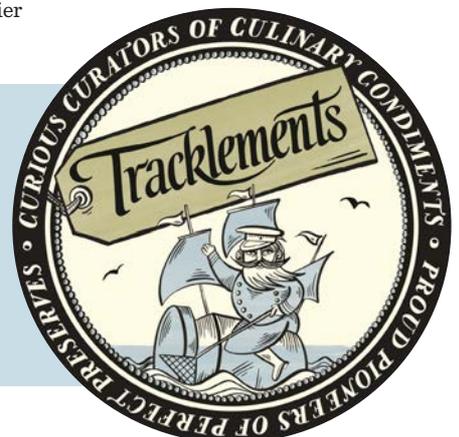
Point taken. Sleep deprivation is a 21st-century problem – so much so that the enterprising owners of Pop & Rest have opened a sleep centre in London's Old Street where exhausted parents, jet-lagged travellers and weary commuters can rent nap pods by the hour.

There are numerous food and drink products aimed at insomniacs. Selfridges is selling Sleep Tea from the Niche Co. It contains chamomile, lavender and lemon balm for a peaceful night's slumber. Waitrose offers a milk drink called Sleep Well which contains full Jersey milk, honey, vanilla and valerian. "Drink 30 mins before you want to go to sleep" reads the pack copy. It tastes a tad medicinal but is surely healthier than Temazepam.



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From matcha to turmeric, we take a look at the internationally-inspired trends and flavours that are making an appearance in food and drink products

KOMBUCHA

Internationally-hailing fermented food and drink such as kimchi and sauerkraut have had a strong presence on shop shelves and restaurant menus for a while now, but it's kombucha which is really hitting the spot with consumers. "The European market is witnessing a rise of fermented beverage new product launches," says Julia Buech, food and drink analyst at Mintel. "Kombucha is the current rising star among fermented soft drinks, although it has been consumed for thousands of years in Asia. Known locally as an 'immortal health elixir', the fermented, probiotic tea drink is becoming increasingly popular in the West, where it is marketed as a healthy alternative to artificial soft drinks."

JUJUBE

Demand for the jujube fruit – aka the red date – looks set to be on the rise. Hailing from the Far East, it's

been consumed for its health and wellbeing benefits for thousands of years, and contains 18 of the 24 amino acids – its ability to help tissue recover makes it popular as a post-workout snack. The little caramel-flavour fruits are also extremely high in vitamin C and are referred to as an 'adaptogen', which is said to help the body cope with stress.

London-based healthy food start-up Abakus Foods' founder Helen Wang has sang the praises of the jujube fruit for years, going as far as to make a range of snacks using it. "I formed my company in 2016 – I was working long hours in finance and was pretty stressed,

so my mum started sending me parcels containing jujube from China," she says. "It's not easy to find something that tastes good and is good for you, too. I thought they're pretty remarkable and should be made available over here. It's not all about the health benefits, either. The jujube tree is very water-efficient and can survive periods of drought. Because of this, they're planted in arid areas to help fight against desertification. It's very sustainable and a real gift of nature."

YUZU

Yuzu, a citrus fruit believed to be a hybrid between the Ichang papeda

and Satsuma mandarin, is another hugely popular ingredient. Hailing from East Asia, it is revered for its punchy citrus taste, and has become an ingredient that is making waves in the premium food sector.

You'd be hard-pressed to find the fruit itself in the UK, but its juice can be commonly found on the shelves in supermarkets like Waitrose. A great example of a producer deftly incorporating the ingredient into their wares is the award-winning Lauden Chocolate's Japanese Yuzu & White Chocolate Ganache – the sharp flavour is wonderfully offset by creamy sweetness.

SAFFRON

Experts from Mintel believe that saffron won't just be seen on the menus of upscale restaurants any more, and we can increasingly expect to see it on the ingredients lists of packaged goods like condiments, sauces, soups, stews, teas and desserts.

The premium spice – it takes more than 70,000 flowers to produce one pound of saffron – has been favoured by brands seeking to intensify the flavour and colour of their products. "Saffron is an all-natural spice that has arrived," says Kathleen Kennedy, global food and drink analyst at Mintel. "It is trending in foodservice, especially where world flavours, such as Mediterranean, Middle Eastern or African are called for. The transformative ingredient adds flavour, aroma, and vibrant colour to otherwise bland dishes."

MATCHA GREEN TEA

The vibrant green tea from Japan has been proving very popular with consumers over the last few years, especially health and fitness fans. Many soft drinks brands are looking to matcha, although, due to the extreme sensitivity of the ingredient, it is advised that it is packaged in an aluminium can or a Tetra Pak to keep it in optimum condition.

WHAT TO STOCK

ABAKUS RED DATES

Enjoy red dates – or jujube fruit – as a snack or as a natural sweetener in porridge, cooking, baking or smoothies.

abakusfoods.com



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lovematchatea.co.uk



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Take stock with our new food and drink round-up

NovelTea tells the Tale of Oolong

New Producer Award-winner NovelTea has launched the third option in its range of alcoholic teas: The Tale of Oolong.

An infusion of Scotch whisky and oolong tea, the beverage draws inspiration from flavours and scents symbolic of China, with hints of jasmine, rose petals and mango combined with punchy Scotch whisky and oolong tea.

As self-proclaimed 'tea mixologists', the team behind Noveltea cold-brew and infuse tea with a complementary spirit – so far gin, rum or whisky – to create a premium ready-to-drink brew which can be enjoyed either hot or cold.

There are two other products in the range: The Tale of Earl Grey, an infusion of black tea with British gin and botanicals; and The Tale of Tangier, a combination of green mint tea with spearmint, dried lemongrass, dried apple, blackberry leaves and Caribbean white rum.

Vincent Efferoth, co-founder of Noveltea said, "We were keen to develop the range and present a different tasting experience for our customers. All of our tales can be served cold or warm and at this time of year The Tale of Oolong, served warm in particular, becomes the perfect winter warmer."
noveltea-drinks.com



Super U ticks health boxes

A brand has been launched by a Newcastle couple to satisfy the consumer demand for new and inspiring health-boosting food and drink products.

Super U, a range of organic superfood powders which can be used in smoothies and baking, is available in three variants: Clean Greens, a blend of baobab, barley grass, chlorella, moringa, pineapple, wheatgrass, spirulina and camu camu which works to maintain a healthy immune system and fight fatigue; Berry Beauty, which combines chia seeds, acai, blackcurrant, blueberry, goji, maqui, strawberry, acerola and cranberry supports the body's digestive system while boosting the health of skin, hair and nails, and Muscle Protein which is a dairy-free alternative to mainstream protein powders.

Charlotte Bailey, co-founder said, "Increasingly, consumers are becoming interested in taking responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. They are looking for convenient and great tasting solutions which Super U provides through a range of innovative superfood powder blends. With premium packaging developments and a determined focus to only use the highest quality ingredients, we're confident that independent food retailers will be meeting the needs of their customers through stocking our range."
superu.co.uk



Fairfields Launch Festive Kelly Bronze Option

Essex-based Fairfields have created what they deem the ultimate festive snack just in time for Christmas: Kelly Bronze Turkey, Sage & Onion crisps.

Available in 150g sharing bags, the new variant combines the succulent flavour of hand-reared bronze turkey with the savoury and herby punch of sage and onion. The crisps are made using hand-selected potatoes which are grown on the Fairfields Farm and cooked in its purpose-built crisp factory just metres away.

Created in partnership with the renowned Kelly Bronze Turkeys brand, Fairfields believes this new product "sums up Christmas in one perfect crunch".

"We are delighted to be working with another local firm, Kelly Bronze Turkeys, to bring our customers a delicious seasonal snack. The 150g sharing bag is perfect for festive entertaining," says Laura Strathern, co-founder Fairfields Farm Crisps.
fairfieldsfarmcrisps.co.uk



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Salcombe Gin unveils Guiding Star

Salcombe Gin has partnered with iconic Portuguese wine-maker Dirk Niepoort to create Guiding Star, the first in the brand's Gin Voyage Series and named after a well-known Salcombe Fruit Schooner built in 1874.

The new launch is a tawny port cask-finished slow and damson gin, blended with handpicked botanicals to draw out the fruit's natural sweetness and complement their natural aromas and flavours. It has been aged in an 80-year-old tawny port cask which previously contained Niepoort's famous Colheita 1997 20-year-old tawny port.

No sugar has been added to the gin, which is unusual for a sloe variant; the well-balanced sweetness comes from the lees in the port cask, which combine with a strong backbone of juniper, rose petals, orange peel and bitter almonds.

Angus Lugsdin, co-founder of Salcombe Gin said, "We are extremely excited to be working with Dirk Niepoort and his team at the world famous Niepoort Winery to create this very special addition to the Salcombe Gin Voyager Series. With a shared love for distinctive flavours and combining tradition with innovation, we have worked together to create this exceptional premium sloe & damson gin."

Dirk Niepoort said, "It was a pleasure to work with the team at Salcombe Distilling Company to create this truly exceptional gin. Angus and I worked together at our winery in Portugal to refine the recipe, choosing botanicals that would complement the complex aromas and flavours in our tawny port and to hand-pick the perfect cask for aging the liquid to ensure a perfectly balanced flavour that the Niepoort family are proud of."

salcombegin.co.uk



Eternitea comes to the UK

Aimed at health-conscious consumers looking for functional refreshment while on-the-go, the newly-launched Eternitea is a refreshing, sugar-free beauty drink containing 2500mg of hydrolysed collagen.

Each 400ml bottle contains under 30 calories, and there are two flavours in the range: Yuzu Fruit and Pomegranate. Both are 100% natural and contain moringa tea, aloe vera and inulin, each of which boasts health benefits – from hydration and gut health to anti-ageing and glowing skin.

Richard Horwell, managing director of Brand Relations said, "Eternitea hydrates with spring water, refreshes the skin and bones with collagen, and is an excellent source of antioxidants. Best of all, it comes in two delicious flavours. What more could you want?"

eternitea.co.uk



New granola bar range from GNAW

Norfolk-based GNAW are confident that they've found the key to healthy yet satisfying low-sugar snacks: their new chocolate and granola bars.

Handcrafted in Norfolk using seeds, fruit, nuts and granola, each bar in the new range is a great source of fibre – of a 35g bar, up to 14% is fibre – meaning that this is a truly healthy way to enjoy chocolate.

There are three options in the range: Milk Chocolate with Peanuts, British Granola & Seeds; Milk Chocolate with Cranberries, Raisins, British Granola and Seeds and Dark Chocolate with Orange, British Granola & Seeds.

Every bar is suitable for vegetarians and gluten-free, and the dark chocolate option is also dairy-free.

Matt Legon, founder of GNAW said, "We are always keen to make life as easy as possible for busy retailers; GNAW supply the bars pre-packed in their own eye-catching display unit – simply remove the top and display; designed to be placed close to your till point or on your coffee shop counter, these are the perfect impulse purchase."

gnawchocolate.co.uk

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BULLION CHOCOLATE

Max Scotford, founder of Bullion Chocolate, is passionate about single-origin chocolate made from bean-to-bar practices

WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND BULLION CHOCOLATE?

I've always been a big foodie, so when I finished school I went to catering college and trained to be a chef. It was around that time I fell in love with the idea of chocolate. One thing led to another, and I started making it at home – towards the end of university, I was exploring the idea of creating a business around it. As I started researching the history of chocolate, I found out about the ancient Maya Indians, who used to value cocoa beans more than gold, and used it as currency. And I began to think that, as a nation, we've lost sight of that value – we just see it as a grab-and-go item. I thought I'd look into it a bit more and I discovered the bean to bar movement, which involves craft makers that import cocoa beans and roast speciality cacao from scratch.

WHAT MAKES YOU STAND OUT?

We're working with cacao beans from scratch – there are not many makers in the UK doing that. It's exciting because with every new origin that we discover, it's our job to showcase these different profiles and do each chocolate justice. As for our customers, it shows them a different side of chocolate they probably never even knew existed. The bean to bar movement is a completely new way of working with chocolate, looking at chocolate, and it's really starting to gain traction here in the UK. And it's so different to what consumers expect from a chocolate bar here in the UK – consumers say, "wow, how did I not know chocolate could taste like this?"



CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR RANGE?

All our bars are 70% cocoa, so when people taste them side by side, they can clearly see how different each chocolate can taste depending on its origin. There are three bars at the moment: Haiti, Bolivia and

Guatemala. Haiti is from the Acul Du Nord region, grown by an association for farmers, and the flavour profile has caramelly, raisin and figgy notes. That was the first one we got an academy of chocolate award with, back in 2017, which really put us on the map for craft chocolate. Then

there's Bolivia, and the flavour notes can alter every year – but the Bolivia harvest for this year had brownie notes, with a honey tinge. The Bolivia bar won us Bronze in the academy of chocolate awards last year. Guatemala, on the other hand, is very jammy and peachy in flavour –

SPOTLIGHT ON: BULLION'S CHOCOLATE CAFE

When?
Opening November 2018

Where?
Kelham Island, Sheffield, Food Hall

On the menu
Single-origin, bean to bar chocolate in every guise you can think of: hot chocolate, brownies, bakes and more...

And to drink...
The café will serve artisan, speciality coffee from London-based coffee roasters, Caravan

Highlights
Once Bullion Chocolate's adjoining factory has opened (expected January 2019), you can expect to see expert chocolatiers crafting the cacao beans at every stage of the process – from roasting to tempering and moulding

perfect for pairing with cheese.

I'd like to grow the range eventually, but at the moment these three bars are a vehicle for what I'm trying to achieve with the brand.

WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON FOR BULLION CHOCOLATE?

We're opening a café and factory in Sheffield: the café's opening next month, and the factory should be open by January. The main focus of it all is to champion chocolate. There will be a big glass counter at the coffee bar, looking into the chocolate factory, meaning that you can actually see the chocolate being made – it's a very one-of-a-kind concept. Because we focus on single-origin chocolate, the café will also play up to that, so there will be single-origin hot chocolate, some baked goods as well. For example, our Haiti-origin chocolate has some really figgy notes, so we'll create a sticky toffee pudding brownie, which will really work with those flavours. We're not trying to do anything savoury – it's literally just all things chocolate!

“ We offer consumers something different to what consumers expect from a chocolate bar. They say “wow, how did I not know chocolate could taste like this?” ”

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The whole premise behind Nemi Teas is to empower refugees, to give them an opportunity that they otherwise struggle to get. Nearly three years ago we met some refugees, and were amazed that despite having perfect English and amazing work experience, they still couldn't get jobs. The main pushback they get is the fact that they don't have local work experience. That's where the idea for Nemi spawned – the concept of giving refugees initial work experience at a UK company to add to their CV, as well as a local referee.

I have Indian heritage, and whenever I travel to India to visit relatives I become addicted to chai – it's everywhere, being brewed on every street corner. Back in London I missed freshly-brewed chai; thanks to Starbucks we're familiar with the concept of chai in terms of chai lattes, but there was nobody brewing it fresh as we do.

We started with chai tea stalls at various London food markets, brewing fresh chai. That was to test the water – to see if people are interested in chai blends, as well as testing the model of integrating refugees into a market situation. Speaking to customers at a market helps them improve their English, and gain confidence that they are being appreciated by locals. This seems a very basic thing, but it can mean a lot to an individual who doesn't come from this country.

I come from a corporate background so was able to see that this social enterprise concept made



NEMI TEAS

Pranav Chopra, CEO of Nemi Teas, has combined his Indian heritage with a social enterprise concept to make waves in the tea sector

sense financially as well as having a social impact. It's not easy, it feels like we are running two separate businesses – the tea side of things takes a lot of management, let alone sourcing and vetting refugees. The social enterprise space is growing – more and more businesses are looking to do good – and not just in the 'giving £1 for every £10 we earn' model, but in terms of doing business responsibly. I'm here to prove that a business doesn't need

to be a charity to do good, that social benefit can be built in to the business rather than being an add-on, and the UK is the perfect place to do that – the ecosystem for social enterprises is amazing, there is so much support around that it's sometimes felt that Nemi is on some kind of fast-track.

Our retail range consists of loose-leaf tea, all of which is Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance-certified, and teabags, which are plastic-free and 100% biodegradable. We have six

varieties: Spicy Chai and Cardamom Chai, Earl Grey, English Breakfast, Green Tea and Peppermint Tea. Our wholesale customers have a few more options to choose from, including Lemongrass & Ginger, Rooibos and Assam. We've also created a chai syrup as an alternative to the powders on the market – a lot of them contain additives and milk powder, which means they could be dangerous for intolerant consumers. I wanted to

create a more natural alternative, so cold brewed our own chai blend and added enough sugar to mean that it doesn't require preservatives and also is true to the super sweet Indian chais (which are brewed with condensed milk). As well as being delicious made into a hot drink, the syrup is great for cocktail-making, too. My favourite is our Cardamom Chai blend. Everyone is familiar with Masala Chai, the spicy version, but cardamom chai is the one you tend to drink at home. But every option in our range has been popular – and we've had great reviews for our English Breakfast and Earl Grey teas, too; it's important to have a top-end blend as our mainstream offering. Our range has grown according to what our customers have asked for; we started with chai, but our café customers didn't want to be working with one supplier for chai and another for their other blends, so we expanded our range.

The tea being drunk in offices, cafés and kitchens should be Nemi Tea – we already have the likes of DeutscheBank and Grand Thornton serving us in their canteens, replacing products from brands such as PG Tips and Tetley, meaning that we're able to bring more refugees into the business. It's great to be able to make a tangible, measurable impact on people's lives – especially by sharing appreciation for an traditional product from my heritage.



“ It's great to be able to make a tangible, measurable impact on people's lives – especially by sharing appreciation for an traditional product from my heritage ”

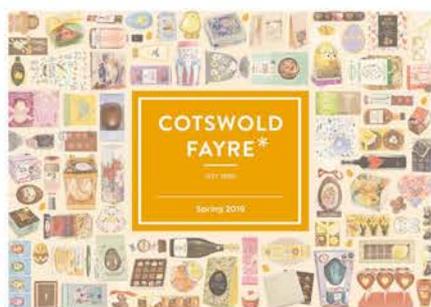
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SPRING 2018



OUT NOW...



HIVE URBAN FARMS

Gareth Williams and Dien Curtis' passion for sustainability led them to create an innovative urban farm in Manchester



From two students growing mushrooms in their airing cupboards to a successful business stocking Manchester's up-and-coming restaurants, Hive Urban Farms has come a long way. "I'm really interested in food – I'd like to think I'm a good cook!" laughs Gareth, claiming that this, along with a passion for urban agriculture, was what helped the business come together. "Dien and I met at the University of Manchester, where we were both studying Geography, and we became interested in sustainability and urban issues. That's where it started, and then that became an interest in food – particularly the socio-economic aspects of it – access to food, good-quality food at that."

It's clear that, from the get-go, sustainability has been a keystone of the business. "In a post-industrial city like Manchester, there are lots of people that fell out of heavy industry and have never found a way back into work," says Gareth. "Urban agriculture has potential to fill that gap – it's very flexible, you can use contaminated land – land that would not be used for anything else. Plus it provides on-the-job training – you don't really need any qualifications for it, you can learn it as you go, so it's good for people who are looking to retrain or don't have qualifications."

When we think of farming, we tend to imagine rolling hills and fields in the countryside – but Hive's model is a far cry from that. "We both wrote dissertations on urban agriculture and did our research in a warehouse in Salford, but when it closed down shortly after, we thought we could



do a better job!" exclaims Gareth.

"We had full-time jobs at that point, so we weren't dependent on it to make money for us, it was a bit of a pet project really. We registered the company and started experimenting – we're talking Tupperware boxes filled with mycelium and waste coffee

grounds growing in airing cupboards! Our housemates weren't very happy when they'd open the cupboard and find a box of mushrooms growing next to their washing!"

Disgruntled housemates aside, it wasn't long before the company started developing in leaps and

bounds. "There's an organisation called Manchester Entrepreneurs, which runs an accelerator – we applied and were invited to pitch. We had never done anything like it before, so we spent three hours practising a one-minute elevator pitch! To our surprise, we were

THE FUTURE OF HIVE

"We can't produce what we've got demand for at the moment," says Gareth, "which is a great position to be in, but we'd love to be supplying every restaurant in Manchester! So we're applying for various funding to scale it up in quite a big way. We probably produce around 15 to 22 kilos per week currently, and we're looking to scale up to be producing somewhere around 250 kilos a week. We'd be quite interested in developing into the retail market, too, and creating new products – like mushroom powder, seasoning and dried mushrooms. We'd class ourselves as an agricultural technology company, and that's going to be really important as we face leaving the EU. If there's anything positive that comes from Brexit, it's that there's a real opportunity for British produce and British agriculture to be revitalised."

offered the funding, and used some of that money to go to Seeds&Chips, the global food innovation summit in Milan. Last May we spoke as part of the association for local farming."

Dien and Gareth set up a mini farm in November last year. "We focused on mushrooms because we were both still working full-time at that point, and they essentially look after themselves. We walked into restaurants with samples, and loads of chefs were interested. An awful lot of our mushrooms in the UK are grown in Poland, which from our point of view has a big carbon footprint, and chefs were saying how much better our mushrooms tasted. It never takes longer than an hour from harvesting our mushrooms to being at their kitchen doors – that's really important to us." From there, it was onwards and upwards for Hive, as they began supplying their mushrooms to big names in Manchester's restaurant scene like Hispi, TNQ, and Mary-Ellen McTague's The Creameries.

“ We'd class ourselves as an agricultural technology company, and that's going to be really important as we face leaving the EU ”

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NovelTea goes beyond being a beverage to being about culture, tradition and international tastes. Lukas and I became friends at Newcastle University, and between us have travelled from Morocco to Singapore to experience their tea cultures. In my home country, Germany, you drink tea because you like the flavour, whereas in the UK you drink tea because it's a deep-rooted tradition. Even in a city like Newcastle – famous for its party and alcohol scene – has a tea house; it's open from 9am until midnight and is always full, despite not selling alcohol at all. We became familiar with the tradition of afternoon tea and were interested to discover that alcohol is now being listed on the menu alongside tea. Champagne and Prosecco are commonplace, but nowadays it seems you can enjoy any type of alcoholic drink with your afternoon tea.

“WE REPRESENT DIFFERENT TEA CULTURES AND FLAVOURS”

We were surprised that nobody had combined these two popular drinks – tea and alcohol – so we decided to do just that and represent different tea cultures and flavours. The Tale of Earl Grey, our combination of Earl Grey tea with gin, was partly inspired by our adopted city's heritage; not a lot of people know that the famous Earl Grey (after whom the tea was named) came from Newcastle and has a big monument in the city centre. There are so many stories, histories and traditions around tea in every culture – that's why we



NOVELTEA

Vincent Efferoth, together with co-founder Lukas Passia, is shaking up the drinks market with his brand's truly original offering

decided to name our products 'The Tale of...'. Our latest launch, The Tale of Oolong, is a blend of Chinese tea and whisky. In Chinese, 'oolong' means 'black dragon' – hence the black dragon on our label – and they are already blending tea with whisky, so we're tapping into Chinese tea traditions there. It may seem unusual, mixing tea with alcohol, but it has been done in the UK before;

in the eighteenth century, I believe, women in the Birmingham area were using earl grey tea as a mixer for their gin because the gin was too rough to drink on its own.

“WE DON'T OVERPOWER THE TASTE OF THE TEA”

In contrast to the iced teas you buy in the supermarket we don't use any concentrates or extracts – instead,

we cold brew real loose leaf tea (which creates a smoother, less bitter taste than hot brewed tea, which can sometimes put people off drinking it altogether) then blend that with a spirit with complementary flavours. We don't want to overpower the flavour of the tea, we want to produce a drink which combines the core and top notes of the spirits we use with the base notes of the tea. Our

products have a lower than average ABV compared to other bottled spirits – just 11% – plus they're vegan, gluten-free and contain no artificial colours, so they appeal to health-conscious consumers.

“WE WANT TO GO GLOBAL”

The alcohol industry is a little bit stagnant, so we're excited to increase availability to our customers and get NovelTea further into the retail sector – we launched in April 2017, and within a couple of months were sold in Newcastle, then after four months in Harrods and The Whisky Exchange, and after five or six months in John Lewis. We'd like to look into bars, restaurants and hotels as there we can create a full experience around the product. We want to go global; we started exporting to China in February and have just launched in Germany, so there are a lot of markets – as well as their tastes and traditions – to explore.

WHAT'S IN THE RANGE?

- **The Tale of Earl Grey:** Strong earl grey tea complemented with British gin
- **The Tale of Tangier:** Moroccan green mint tea with Rum
- **The Tale of Oolong:** Oolong tea with whisky

HOW DO YOU SERVE IT?

In 125ml servings – in a tumbler with ice cubes, warmed through, in cocktails or neat.

PERSONAL FAVOURITE?

That's a difficult one. I developed The Tale of Tangier and The Tale of Oolong, but for me it really depends on how I feel, so if I had time for one before we go out I'd probably go for the Tangier, because it's very refreshing, nice and easy and very flavourful. If I'm not feeling well, I go for The Tale of Tangier warmed up, and during the week I would go either for Oolong or Earl Grey.

“ NovelTea is all about creating something very different and unique, and taking people on a journey ”

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NEVER.25

Kecia McDougall, founder of Never.25, introduces her modern British brand with integrity at its heart



WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND NEVER.25?

In 1990, I had made the decision to move over to the UK to be with my now husband, Duncan. At the time I didn't know if what I was doing was just plain crazy or if anything would come of it, and I was incredibly upset – but knew this was the next step in my life that I needed to take. I sold everything, moved out of my apartment and said goodbye to my family at the airport.

While on the plane, an African-American woman was sitting beside me and could see how distraught I was leaving my family, she turned to me and said, "Honey! Honey! You're going to be just fine! Where you headin'?" I explained my story and that I was heading to Pontypool in Wales. "Well," she said "give me your address – I want to send you something when you arrive!"

I hadn't thought anything of it but gave her my address. Three weeks later, a Bluebird ornament appeared with a note saying "Wishing you love and happiness on this next journey in your life."

Having spent two days with brand experts The Gothenberg Experiment, it wasn't until the end of the second day that one of them noticed a Bluebird Café poster on my kitchen wall. Relaying the day's work back to my husband, he said, "Hmm, that's interesting – do you remember the lady on the plane when you came over, gave you a Bluebird ornament?" And so, the story behind the brand was complete and Bluebird was to be an integral part of our artwork. The name Bluebird was unfortunately



trademarked, and the search began to find a name that not only fitted with the story but also shared the amount of soul and passion behind the brand. The family all chipped in to help and my father-in-law rang to ask how it was going, and went on to say "Oh, and I am really sorry

I forgot about your 25th wedding anniversary!" I couldn't believe it – not only had my father-in-law forgot but so had I! I looked at Duncan and said, "It's never 25?" The name was born! A name that easily encompassed the meaning and passion behind the brand.

WHAT MAKES YOU DIFFERENT IN THE EVER-CHANGING DRINKS MARKET?

Something we are incredibly proud of is the fact that we locally source all of the produce to make our spirit in Fife and Tayside, Scotland. We can name all of the farmers we

collect our fruit and grain from and there is plenty of it – the whole ethos behind the brand was to create a product with the produce I had around me. There is such a hot topic around provenance within the food and drink industry and what it means to be a Scottish spirit, Never.25 can really claim to be wholly Scottish. We buy our produce in Scotland, make the entire spirit in Scotland and label, bottle and wax in Scotland. Not only that, we are the only Eau de Vie in Scotland too, so that helps us a little!

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOURSELF AND THE PRODUCTION PROCESS?

You might think I am crazy, but I am the distiller as well as the director. I hand-produce the entire spirit and then soak in all the fresh fruit. I really get involved within the entire process, I have to! It's only me and my daughter who run the business; we share some of the admin, Mary takes care of the marketing and social media and then I also make the entire product.

All of the relationships we have with the farmers and workers when we collect the grain and fruit are integral to enhancing our process – so being at the forefront of the spirit-making and having discussions with farmers and millers is really important; they know all about the products they create so any advice you can take away from them is invaluable.

On top of the collection of our fruit and grain, I am always keen to experiment and try new things! The eau de vie recipe we have was handcrafted by myself – sometimes you have got to trust your own instincts with these things and it seems to have worked.

WHAT'S IN THE RANGE?

- Strawberry, Raspberry, Blueberry and Apple Eau de Vie
- **Personal favourite:** Blueberry

“ Sometimes you have got to trust your own instincts with these things, and it seems to have worked! ”

OUT OF THE ORDINARY

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“I’ve always loved cheese”, says Ellie Phoebe Brown, founder of Kinda Co., “but when I stopped eating dairy three years ago I couldn’t find a tasty vegan alternative. As someone who enjoys cooking I thought I’d try making my own and started experimenting with different recipes using nuts in place of dairy. I was pleasantly surprised with the results and tried them out on all my vegan and non-vegan friends. When everyone came back with compliments I thought that perhaps I should start selling my cheese so that more people could get their hands on it! I had a food blog at the time and wanted to get into the food world in some way and cheese seemed to be the perfect opportunity.”

Ellie isn’t the only consumer who had struggled with the vegan cheeses available in the market up until that point – “Vegan cheese typically has a bad reputation, which I can understand, having been disappointed myself,” she says. “The thing that sets Kinda Co. apart from a lot of the other vegan cheese available is quite simply its taste; we culture our cheese using a traditional method which is what gives it its authentic cheesy taste. The range of products that we make at Kinda Co. is also very unique; our Marinated Feta, Nacho Dip and Faux Lox & Dill cream cheese are products that you wouldn’t easily find elsewhere.”

As a one-man-band it’s not always easy to balance everything on the To Do list, as Ellie has found. “As a small, artisan producer I am



KINDA CO.

A lack of satisfying options on the market led Ellie Phoebe Brown to develop a range of thoroughly innovative vegan cheese products

involved with each and every step of making our products. Not just in terms of developing and testing the recipes but also in sourcing ingredients and making the cheese at each different stage.” This is set to change, though, with recent investment paving the way to a larger-scale operation with more hands on board. “At the moment

we are still fairly small scale and everything is done by hand, including packaging and labelling each product, but we hope to be able to streamline things as we grow,” Ellie explains.

It’s not only Kinda Co.’s flavours which have seen it gain fans; the brand offers a wide variety of products, too – making it a great

all-round option for vegan cheese-lovers. “At the moment we sell eight products: Greek Style, which is like a Feta cheese and our only cheese made with almonds. The remainder of our cheeses all use cashews as a base. We make a Garlic & Herb and Smoked Paprika round aged cheese, a Faux Lox & Dill Cream cheese style, which has pieces of salt

WHAT’S NEXT?

We have a busy few months ahead with lots of Christmas orders and markets to get ready for! We were delighted to win the Dragons Den style competition at Bread & Jam at the beginning of October which was offering £25k investment and £10k branding support to an upcoming food brand. We are currently in talks with the foodie Dragons about the investment and where we are going to take Kinda Co. next. We have big plans and would absolutely love to have our artisan, dairy-free cheese widely available in the near future.

baked and marinated carrot in as the ‘salmon’. We also make a slightly spicy Nacho Dip, a Farmhouse spread which has a strong, mature flavour and can be thought of as a kind of spreadable Cheddar. We also make a few block cheeses, a Cranberry one and a Farmhouse flavour.

“When it comes to picking a favourite,” says Ellie, “I always say it’s like choosing between my children – it’s too hard to choose as I love them all! I develop the flavours that I want to eat myself so naturally I enjoy them all, although I have been eating a lot of the Farmhouse Spread recently. Jars of it keep somehow keep sneaking back from the production kitchen into my home!”

With a wide range of delicious-tasting, versatile products and a passionate ambassador behind it, Kinda Co. truly is one to watch.

IN THE RANGE

- Marinated Feta
- Nacho dip
- Faux Lox & Dill cream cheese
- Cranberry block cheese
- Farmhouse block cheese
- Farmhouse spread
- Greek Style cheese
- Garlic & Herb round aged cheese
- Smoked Paprika round aged cheese

“ What sets Kinda Co. apart from a lot of the other vegan cheese available is quite simply its taste; we culture our cheese using a traditional method which is what gives our cheese its authentic cheesy taste ”

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HUNTER & GATHER



Amy Moring and Jeff Webster, co-founders of Hunter & Gather, are champions of making quality free-from food satisfying for all

WHAT'S BEHIND THE NAME, HUNTER & GATHER?

One of our beliefs as a brand is that we should be eating more like how our ancestors used to – nothing processed or unnatural. Also, my grandparents' surname is Hunt and Jeff's grandparents' surname is Gathergood, so it all fitted quite well!

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO LAUNCH THE BRAND?

Jeff and I met as teenagers. I've been a lifelong coeliac – I was diagnosed at 18 months old – and I've always eaten real food. Jeff was on a conventional diet but had problems with his skin and was always hungry, so decided to research the keto and paleo approaches and began experimenting with his diet along those principles. The issues he was experiencing improved drastically, and he went on to understand more about allergies and how some people react to different foods – meanwhile we were eating real food at home and began to develop the concepts behind Hunter and Gather. We realised that people understood the importance of eating good-quality meat and organic fruit and vegetables, but when it came to condiments and sauces they were happily consuming products piled high with sugars and chemicals. We were making our own mayonnaise at home, using avocado oil, and wondered if other people would be interested in it as a completely natural alternative to what was out there.



WHAT MAKES YOU STAND OUT?

Our principles are key to what we do. As well as ensuring that our products contain no sugars, grains or harmful fats, we promise that we only use quality ingredients to produce a quality product. Transparency is also

very important to us; our customers trust as we're transparent in our beliefs, sourcing and labelling. We care for the environment, too – we use glass jars and paper labels, and reduce plastic as much as we can. It's important to us that we pay a fair price to our suppliers; we source

our avocado oil from Kenya where there's an education programme, and our prices help allow for the education to continue for future generations.

We carried out our own research to reach our conclusions about what is best for our bodies; we're all

given information by the powers that be, and read stuff in the media, which doesn't necessarily work for everyone and is too often taken at face value. Dairy can be beneficial to some people and not to others, so it's important that consumers educate themselves. What works for some doesn't always work for all. We came across this while we were creating our avocado oil mayonnaise; we were originally told that we wouldn't be able to make it without sugars or additional emulsifier, but we managed it. None of our products contain hidden ingredients – what you see is what you get.

WHAT'S IN THE RANGE?

We produce three flavours of avocado mayonnaise: Classic, Chipotle Chilli & Lime and Garlic; a cold-pressed extra virgin olive oil, and an MCT coconut oil. My favourite is the avocado oil because it's incredibly versatile; I use it for cooking, but you can also use it for beauty – it's full of vitamin E and oleic acid.

WHAT'S NEXT?

We're always innovating, and continually have new products in the pipeline – Jeff in particular is very experimental! We'd love to produce a ketchup one day, as well as a completely allergen-free mayo. Ours currently contains eggs, so while vegan consumers can enjoy our avocado oil they can't buy our mayonnaise. There are vegan mayonnaises on the market but they tend to contain other allergens, such as soya. However, customers can rest assured that every single one of our products will be gluten-free.

THE HUNTER & GATHER PROMISE:

- No sugars
- No grains
- No harmful fats
- High quality ingredients
- Transparent sourcing and labelling
- Caring about people and the planet

“ We're always innovating, and continually have new products in the pipeline – Jeff in particular is very experimental! ”

BREAD & JAM

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In spite of being a relatively young company, Russian Pies had been in the making for over 200 years. "My family started a bakery around 1812 and had a chain of bakeries over St Petersburg which were very successful", says Leeza. "Right up to 1917 when the Communist Revolution came, my family were quite affluent and considered capitalists because they owned a bakery business, and they had the business taken off of them. But what survived from that period were the recipes, and we're now using many of them – particularly the pie dough recipe, which has made us very successful in competitions."

When you think of pie, you probably imagine hot, flaky pastry – a little different from Russian Pies' creations. But it's this uniqueness that has driven their success. "The whole idea of a pie which is not encased in pastry but dough is what attracts both customers and professionals who buy for their shops and restaurants," claims Leeza. "We seem to be quite unique for the UK market, there are some restaurants and cafes in different parts of the UK doing Russian food, mostly in London, some in the North, but nobody does Russian food quite the way we do." 'Nobody', it seems, may even stretch to Russians themselves, as Steve adds, "One of our customers at the Wheat Fair – he's a Business professor, who's worked in Russia a lot – says that the quality of these pies is far superior to the equivalent pies you get in Russia. That's what makes them quite such an innovation, that when Russian people see our pies in this country they're astounded by how beautiful they are, and



THE RUSSIAN FOOD COMPANY

Family recipes, heritage and artisan methods are key ingredients for the success of Leeza Murina and Steve Jones' handcrafted pie company

how much more interesting the fillings are."

The pies are a perfect fusion of traditional Russian and British flavours, always encased in the signature dough.

"Our range includes: Salmon & Cream Cheese, Seafood Chowder,

Seabass & Cod, Lamb with Chestnut & Apricot, Lamb with Lingonberry, Chicken & Chorizo, and Roasted Vegetable," Leeza tells us. "Our lamb pies are especially popular, we've won medals for both of them – which was quite a surprise, because I thought it would be unusual to have lamb with

traditional Russian berries – yet it was awarded Lamb Pie of the Year in the British Pie Awards!" They're hard-pressed to choose favourites, but Steve says he's a big fan of the Salmon & Cream Cheese, while Leeza enjoys the Roasted Vegetable option. Aside from great success in

national awards, the pies have won them a firm fan base. "At the moment, our main customers are proper foodies – visitors to farmers markets and food festivals" explains Leeza. "People who are very interested in good quality, interesting food, and who really care about the appearance of what they eat." This support may fuel the business even further, as Steve adds, "we're considering crowdfunding next year, where we'll offer shares in the business to our customers because they've been such strong supporters over the last few years – it's a way of rewarding them. I've never seen this kind of support in all the marketing jobs I've had in the past; we have customers who drag their friends along to the farmers markets and food festivals and say, 'you've got to try it!'"

WHAT'S NEXT?

There are exciting times ahead for Russian Pies. "We are really lucky to have won investment from a company near us, who support new, growing businesses," Leeza tells us. "With their help, we are hoping to purchase some more equipment, additional ovens and dough mixers, so that we can increase production, plus we'll be employing staff full-time – it makes me very excited! And a little scared, because we are totally going into the unknown, but right now everything seems to be going our way!"

THE RANGE

- Salmon & Cream Cheese
- Sea bass & Cod
- Chicken & Chorizo
- Beef & Onion
- Lamb & Lingonberry
- Lamb, Chestnut & Apricot
- Roasted Vegetable
- Moroccan Vegetable
- Mushroom
- Goat's Cheese

“ We have customers who drag their friends along to the farmers markets and food festivals and say, “you’ve got to try it!” ”

CALLING ALL START-UPS

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FOOD MATTERS LIVE 2018

Discover the freshest trends and meet the food innovators redefining healthy diets

Can fine food retailers keep up with health-conscious consumers' demands for tasty, nutritious and sustainable products – as well as government targets to cut sugar and calories? Find out at Food Matters Live 2018.

Returning to London's ExCeL from 20th-22nd November, Food Matters Live offers an unrivalled educational programme examining the upcoming trends and challenges for the food and drink sector, as well as a curated exhibition showcasing the most innovative better-for-you products and ingredients.

And, with the focused business opportunities provided by Match, a dedicated matchmaking service, there is nowhere better for fine food retailers to meet the innovative producers creating nutritious and ethical products.

Seven months after the soft drinks levy was introduced, four months ahead of Brexit and with fast-paced healthy eating trends and environmental concerns driving consumer demand, Food Matters Live 2018 brings together retailers, manufacturers, policy makers and health professionals at a pivotal time for the food and drink industry.

Inspirational debate from elite speakers

On the main conference stage, lectures and debate from 45 influential speakers will include behavioural insight into the efficacy of calorie-cutting targets, discussion of how food and drink companies are reformulating their products to meet public health demands and examination of the potential changes

to regulation, standards and trading after Brexit.

From whether meat-free beef and algae snacks are the food of the future to the role retailers can play in helping their customers to eat more healthily, the debates, hosted by presenters Anita Anand, Timandra Harkness and Nadine Dereza will consider a huge range of issues.

Speakers include: Blue Planet II executive producer James Honeyborne, who will discuss building on the BBC series' impact on plastic waste awareness; Michelin-starred chef Tom Kerridge, who lost 11 stone in three years and will discuss his personal journey as well as considering how the food and drink industry can help change dietary behaviour; and farming minister George Eustice who will join a panel examining the potential opportunities and threats to innovation in the wake of Brexit.

Marije Vogelzang, who has pioneered a design-led approach to food, including tackling over-eating by using tableware designed to make plates appear fuller, will examine the future of eating design while food writer and campaigner Jack Monroe will consider whether more people can be persuaded to switch to vegan diets.

Latest trends and expert insight

Meanwhile, the Food Matters Live seminars will see hundreds of experts from across the sector shedding new light on everything from successful strategies to reduce food waste and alternative packaging for fresh fruit and vegetables to emerging health-



boosting ingredients, successful retail marketing strategies and whether consumers are really ready to embrace all protein alternatives to meat – including insects. Illustrated with case studies, the seminars offer expert insight and guidance on a wide range of topics, grouped under key themes: retail trends, future technologies, nutrition for health and wellbeing, the future of free-from, packaging, marketing and tackling obesity.

Among speakers, Artisan Food Club founder Marcus Carter will examine strategies for artisan suppliers to find shelf space with independent retailers; Littlefoodie.org co-founder Dr Emma Derbyshire, a registered public health nutritionist, will look at the connection between parent and child nutrition; Esther Pearson, general manager at vegan, gluten-free, organic Clive's Pies will talk about brand innovations in free-from foods; and Franziska Rosario, of raw chocolate brand Lovechoc, which uses compostable



TOM KERRIDGE

wrapping, will discuss the role of packaging design in influencing healthier choices.

Other speakers include: The Food Guide founder Claire Brumby, Mintel retail and drinks analysts Nick Carroll and Jonny Forsyth, Twinings' head of marketing excellence Catherine Coleman-Jinks, Planet Organic's head of buying Al Overton, Nimisha Raja, founder of Nim's Fruit Crisps and David Wood, improvement director at Northumbrian Fine Foods.

Innovative nutritious products

Away from the learning opportunities, visitors can explore and taste for themselves hundreds of healthy, natural, clean-label, free-from and sustainable food and drink products at the Food Matters Live exhibition.

Bringing together 800 manufacturers and organisations, it offers a taste of the new innovative products responding to the public appetite for healthy food and drink.



Showcasing a range of delicious products, from LivOn's vegan antioxidant cold brew coffee and Extense Pharma's no-added-sugar organic truffles to Nutrilicious's pumpkin seed protein bites, coated in organic Belgian chocolate, the exhibition is arranged in zones reflecting retail growth areas including healthy snacking and drinks to free-from goods.

Among them, the Drink Well Zone will feature some of the latest functional and healthy drinks, including organic, Fairtrade and antioxidant-rich cocoa drink Chokkino, INIU drinks – which use cryogenic freezing to preserve 99% of nutrients – and 100% natural cold-pressed Luhv drinks.

Ground-breaking products from Algenheld's algae chocolate to Bodkin's gut-friendly fermented cabbage will be showcased in the Start Up Zone, which hosts the newest entrepreneurs, while in the Research Hub, leading UK and international research organisations offer insight into science and technological advances reshaping the sector.

As the boom continues in the free-from market, which saw sales rise by 40% in 2017, the Free From zone will feature ingredients and products meeting that demand, including H E Stringer Flavours' new organic Pandan Leaf extract, Davina Steel's gluten-free focaccia kits, British-made gluten-free Kettle Chips and Welsh company Lovemore Free From Foods's cherry bakewells and jam tarts.

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Thought-provoking live attractions

A cast of international presenters will host live cooking demonstrations and installations on the exhibition floor, including the International Innovations demonstration theatre, featuring chefs and nutritionists showcasing the benefits of culinary cultures from across the globe.

New for 2018, Food Futures Live will include demonstrations of entrepreneurial food technologies and innovations which, it is hoped, can help food and drink become more sustainable, as the global population expands and resources dwindle.

Meanwhile the Food Matters Live Awards will celebrate the latest innovations across the sector offering health-boosting, eco-friendly and tasty food and drink products, including Innovative Natural and Organic Product of the Year, Sustainability Initiative of the Year and Best New Food and Drink Products of the Year.

Briony Mansell-Lewis, Food Matters Live director said, "Food Matters Live is fast becoming an annual education and business opportunity for many in the industry."

"We're delighted once again to welcome so many experts to share best practice, forge collaborative relationships, find solutions to challenges and explore new ways of working with colleagues across the food, nutrition and health sectors."

Food Matters Live is on at London's ExCeL from 20th to 22nd November 2018 and is free to attend if you pre-register, including entry to the conference, seminars and visitor attractions. Register at foodmatterslive.com

NEED TO KNOW

WHERE: ExCeL, London
WHEN: 20th-22nd November 2018
WEBSITE: foodmatterslive.com
TWITTER: @FoodMattersLive

“We're delighted once again to welcome so many experts to share best practice, forge collaborative relationships, find solutions to challenges and explore new ways of working with colleagues across the food, nutrition and health sectors”

BRIONY MANSELL-LEWIS, FOOD MATTERS LIVE DIRECTOR



Connecting buyers with emerging producers

For buyers who identify potential future partners among exhibitors, Match, Food Matters Live's enhanced match-making service, provides a dedicated meeting space to do business. It offers an unmissable opportunity for retailers looking for the next high-end nutritious and ethical products. Meet The Buyer and Meet The Distributor services connect suppliers of innovative food and drink products and brands with buyers and UK

distributors. Neena Sandhu is corporate and partnerships manager at BoroughBox, which supports small UK producers, and will be part of the Meet the Buyer programme at this year's event. She said: "As a buying team at BoroughBox we're always on the lookout for new and upcoming trends in the market. We're very much ahead in the craft food and drink scene, so often things will be emerging very quickly and it's about finding the quality producers that are out there."

The exhibition also hosts the

largest gathering of ingredients companies in the UK, showcasing products including: Butter Buds non-dairy butter and cream flavours, "clean label" Exberry food colouring, made from fruits and vegetables; Novo Farina's British, gluten-free pea flour and vegan Calcified Atlantic Seaweed, containing bone-building trace elements and minerals.

And international pavilions will bring home nutritious food and drink and ingredients from around the world, as innovators from countries

including Austria, Denmark, China, Peru, Norway, Japan and Italy seek to expand in the UK market.

Andrew Walker, founder of Tea Rex, the world's first raw fruit and root tea, returns this year as both an exhibitor and a seminar speaker. He said he was attracted by the event's intellectual offering: "There is amazing thought leadership, lots of people coming to find out about us. We have a cutting edge product, it's truly fresh, it's unique in the market place and it's a fantastic platform for us to talk about it."

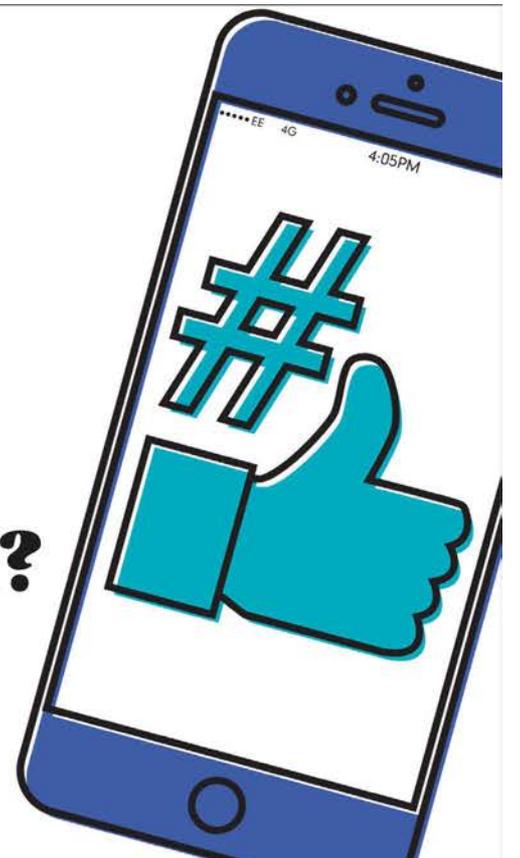


20-22 November
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foodmatterslive.com

register now

Want to really know what's #trending in food and drink?

See the latest in food, health and nutrition at this year's Food Matters Live.





VIEWPOINT: ANGUS THIRLWELL

Hotel Chocolat's founder talks making people happy and doing business differently

I was very lucky to grow up in a family that loves food; my father was one of the early directors of Mr Whippy ice cream in the 1960s and he is a great inspiration. We were always travelling and chasing different foods, and we're all pretty greedy as well, which helps!

I'm a very foodie person, but I also know that you have to have a clever, smart business model to be able to succeed in food. It's not enough just to create great food – a lot of people can do that. I've learned that the trick is

to combine a genuine and honest love of your subject matter with differentiated and smart routes to market. My business partner and I set up a mint business originally, a long time ago, and then that same business evolved into Hotel Chocolat – it very much came about organically.

I like the idea that food can make people happy, and there's no more powerful food for doing that, in my opinion, than chocolate. Even the mention of the word has an effect on people – quite a profound effect. And then

if you can get anywhere near delivering on the promise of what it can do, bang – cocoa nirvana, immediately!

The chocolate market can appear very static. It's been around, in its present guise, for at least 100 years, and there's not much going on. What we've been able to bring to the party is innovation, and we've shown that you can make chocolate taste different and look different to Belgian, Swiss, French chocolate... We do this by having a company chocolate sculptress on our payroll. She's

got the second best job in the world! We also have a strong culture which supports engaged ethics, and a nice way of doing things, and that brings nice people into the brand – it makes your customers feel good and warm about the brand as well. For me, it's not an end in its own right to stand out from the crowd, it's more a consequence of giving yourself permission to rip up the rulebook and try new things and experiment, to excite customers and see what works.

We decided that in order to stand a chance of making some of the best chocolate that was around we would have to learn everything there was to know about the cocoa bean, and that would mean buying an old cocoa estate and getting stuck in – and in effect become farmers. We did that about 12 years ago, and quickly realised that cocoa estates are fabulous places. We became quite intoxicated and decided we had to find a way for our customers to experience it too. We decided to build a little hotel, which we've been running for a few years now. It's heaven.

TALKING POINTS

RETAIL...

We started as a pure e-tailer before we had any physical spaces at all, which meant that when we did start looking at having the luxury of a physical space, we were very clear that it had to do something more than just be transactional. Our spaces have got to bring alive the power to excite that chocolate and cocoa can have.

BREXIT...

I don't think anybody knows what's fully going to happen as a result of Brexit, but we're focusing on what we can control. We'll stay agile and try to adapt, and make the best of whatever is dealt to us. But in our mind there's only a certain amount of time we can spend speculating, we just want to get on with things. We're quite fortunate that we're not an importer of a finished product, we're a maker in Great Britain. So that does insulate us to a certain extent. I think there's probably quite a big difference between manufacturers and importers in how agile or how the factors are going to influence what has to be done, but if we can stay on our toes, stay nimble, and most of all stay very close to our end customers.

THE FUTURE...

The future looks good. My biggest mandate is to nurture and protect and invest in the brand values of Hotel Chocolat. We're very clear about what we stand for, and that means we can't do some things – we have to say no to a lot of things that, ordinarily, if you're thinking about money or short term-ism, you'd say yes to. I believe that as long as we are disciplined in putting the brand first, the future's bright.

“ I've learned that the trick is to combine a genuine and honest love of your subject matter with differentiated and smart routes to market ”

INNOVATION

We invest a disproportionate amount of our capital into research and development; we've got a full time staff of six chocolatiers, a design team who do industrial design and are working on new textures, new fabrics and new construction methods. Innovation has to be genuine – I think there's innovation and there's novelty – knowing the difference between those two things is vital if you're a speciality food maker. I see lots of good innovation based on authenticity and genuine

creativity, which we Brits are brilliant at.

Knowing the end goal – in our case making people happy – makes innovation easier. The risk with innovation is that you have a solution and are looking for a problem. Sadly you do see that around, with tech-driven foods in particular; people come up with something and then try to rationalise that it's the thing that the world can't do without. You have to start by thinking about your customer, and what's missing from their lives. What are they finding difficult, or what would put a smile on their face?

We've amicably solved the issue of Waitrose producing a product in the style of our Slabs. Commendably, they did the right thing, and it was regrettable that it ever came to being something that we had to have a slight dust-up over, but I'm a firm believer in being able to tell what people are really like by how they behave when they're in the wrong or under pressure. I enjoyed meeting up with Rob Collins, the chief executive of Waitrose – we had a good chat and enjoyed some chocolate together, and put the matter to rest. We've sometimes had to deal with imitation from smaller-scale

businesses, too. It doesn't make any difference to us whether it's a small business or a big business, we will still have to communicate and say, hey, look, this is not on. And then we try to establish dialogue and resolve it as quickly as possible. But yes, it tends to be bigger businesses that do it more, though. In order to be sustainable and have a future, small businesses have realised they've got to come up with something that isn't just a knock-off. Customers are not really interested in anything other than original if you're operating at a premium part of the market.

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ITALIAN FOOD IN BRITAIN

The food and drink of Italy has been long been a favourite with British palates – Hannah Freeman explores the popular cuisine



Britain's love affair with Italian food and drink goes back far further than the famous Spaghetti Houses of the 1950s. 2,000 years ago the Roman Empire brought us olive oil and exotic vinegars, changing the history of British cooking for ever, and Sir Christopher Wren famously buried his Parmesan cheeses when the Great Fire of London took hold of the city in 1666. For many, 'Italian' has become a byword for comfort food, often featured on the British 'Top Ten Favourite Dishes' lists; how many portions of Spaghetti Bolognese are still

doled out on weekday evenings across the UK? Thousands, if not millions. However, whereas 30 years ago pesto and pancetta were beginning to emerge as speciality food choices, now people are looking for authentic, ethical and quality products with a provenance – many of these products come from very small regional producers across Italy and Sicily and are made to age-old recipes. So what has invoked this trend for artisan Italian produce and resulted in the Italian food and drink import market being one of the most consistently buoyant in the UK?

There are several factors: the popularity of Mediterranean diets, with their purported health benefits, the rise in high street chains using more unusual ingredients and the supermarkets' embracing of specialist food lines. The popularity of Italy as a tourist destination also goes a long way in the British embracing of Italian cuisine, lower-cost flights to more obscure areas resulting in foodie 'discoveries' and then the quest to replicate a specific meal at home. Consumers have also tried products in UK restaurants, chains and independents, then actively sought them out at speciality food shops or online. For example, one of this year's most fashionable Italian products is the N'duja sausage. This spicy, spreadable sausage comes from Calabria in Southern Italy and is based on a 13th century French recipe. It can be found on restaurant and café menus throughout the country despite being extremely hard to source for domestic use up until recently, and is now available in many delis as well as online – and there are even companies focused solely on importing it.

Italian imports generally fall into four categories: beverages, fresh products, ambient and fermented (charcuterie and cheese), and there are a plethora of importers, many of which deal with only one of two exquisite products, often with PDO (protected designation of origin) status. Italian import companies, however, do vary greatly, from the larger businesses focusing on bringing in bulk products of indeterminate quality, through to those whose businesses started as a passion for a single item or region – like London-based Lavolio, which offers Italian handmade 'boutique confectionery'; fruit, nuts and jellies encased in a spun sugar shell. Company founder, banker turned food entrepreneur, Lavinia Davolio, has now introduced her products into more than 200 outlets including farm shops, delis and Fortnum & Mason.

WINES AND SPIRITS

Italian beverages are also seeing surging popularity. This summer the Negroni was the on-trend cocktail, a classic combination of Gin, Vermouth and Campari. The first ready-made Negroni, Antico Negroni, was produced in 1919 by the Negroni family in Treviso. This trend has, in turn, seen a general



FROM THE RETAILER...

Edinburgh-based Valvona and Crolla is Scotland's oldest deli, established in 1934, to serve the city's Italian immigrant population. It is synonymous with high quality imports of food and wine, and has effortlessly carried itself through 80 years, adapting to tastes whilst educating consumers and moving with the times, according to its website, its "growth is nourished by technology" proving that tradition and technology can work hand-in-hand for the greater good. Valvona and Crolla offers a next day delivery service to 90% of the UK and it is still an independent family business. Gianfranco Perri, of London based, Italian importer, Just Gourmet Foods, believes that, "restauranters, chefs, buyers and consumers are looking for real quality, authentic Italian food products and ingredients" and, "in recent years, there has been a shift away from classic UK Italian dishes and ingredients to a truer representation of Italian food and consumers are looking for clean products in their most natural form to allow the ingredients to be the protagonists."

rising interest in Italian spirits, artisan Grappa and Limoncello as well as the famous bitters and vermouths. In Britain, we have our own version of both Grappa and Limoncello, made by the Devon Distillery and amusingly named Devoncello and Dappa. Italian wines in general, rather interestingly form the top and bottom of many a wine list; a drinkable Nero d'Avola or Montepulciano is often seen as a 'house wine' whilst a full bodied Barolo or Amarone nestles nicely alongside the famous high end Bordeaux and Burgundies. There is certainly a heightened

IN 2017 THE UK IMPORTED OVER
34 MILLION CASES OF ITALIAN WINE,
THE VALUE OF WHICH WAS
ALMOST **£800 MILLION**



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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

It's difficult to imagine how so many pasta shapes can exist from just two ingredients, durum wheat semolina and water, but pasta maker Garofalo is passionate about each individual pasta shape it makes. As the team at Garofalo will tell you – pasta shapes are not all the same, each shape has its specific texture, colour and taste and, therefore, its specific treatment from making it to eating it.

Garofalo shapes range from the ever-popular fusilli, rigatoni and farfalle to the less well-known spaghetti alla chitarra, lumaconi and radiatori. There are 76 different Garofalo pasta shapes available here in the UK, all made with just two ingredients.

There is always a reason behind the name of each shape. Radiatori, a relatively new shape in the world of pasta, are said to resemble radiators, and the Italian word radiatori, translate



literally to radiators in English. Garofalo has taken this one step further and based its Radiatori on the radiator grill of the Bugatti motor car.

Spaghetti all Chitarra is similar to spaghetti but square in shape. Chitarra, meaning guitar, was traditionally made by pressing flat sheets of pasta through thin strings of steel (like guitar strings) in a wooden frame, resulting in square spaghetti.

IN 2018 (JANUARY–AUGUST) OVER 25,000 TONNES OF ITALIAN CHEESE WAS IMPORTED TO THE UK

interest in discovering the quality wines of Italy. Italy has over 329 DOC (Denominazione di Origine Controllata) wines, many of which are familiar household names in the UK. In 2017 the UK imported over 34 million cases of Italian wine, the value of which was almost 800 million pounds, the United States and Germany were the only countries to import more.

However, it has been the sensational success of Prosecco, the UK's favourite sparkling wine beloved of millennials, which has made its mark on European wine export statistics. In 2014, supermarket sales of Prosecco overtook sales of Champagne. The trend has continued and, although other European-method Champagnes and sparkling wines have made

their mark, none has been quite so successful. In 2017 the UK was Prosecco's premier export market, accounting for one third of all Italian Prosecco production, which equates to over 100 million bottles.

CHEESE

Italian cheese imports are also increasing annually, in 2018 (January–August) over 25,000

tonnes of Italian cheese was imported to the UK. The majority of these being the most familiar – Mozzarella, Parmesan and Gorgonzola – but no longer are consumers content with 'standard' cheeses, they are looking for the specialist varieties like buffalo Mozzarella and aged mountain Gorgonzola. The consumer is also seeking out organic varieties; the



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UK organic market now accounts for over two billion pounds per year and is growing at an astonishing rate. Consumers are also seeking organic alternatives to alleviate, in their own minds, any ethical doubts relating to the production of these imported foods. Earlier this year there was some controversy in the media over the treatment of dairy herds in the Italian cheese industry, some campaigners even called for a boycott of Mozzarella and Parmesan cheese. It was alleged that tomato pickers, supplying many of the high-end brands, were proved in some cases to be, in effect, modern slaves. Italy exports 60% of its tomatoes, and for years Italian grown plum tomatoes have been a marker of quality. Again a boycott of certain brands was advocated, but neither of these events has made a real dent in the popularity of Italian cuisine in the UK, although they have raised certain questions.

BRITISH-MADE

British artisanal producers also have an important role to play in the continuing popularity of Italian food; many of these products have extremely high ethical credentials and their makers have been trained



in Italy, using the same methods and recipes. These Italian-style products appear on the menus of some of the best restaurants in the country. It is the question of ethics which often encourages the consumer to choose British-made products over Italian imports. James Swift of Trealy Farm Charcuterie, based in South Wales and one of the country's largest artisan charcuterie producers, believes that, "Italy still

seems to be the dominant source of charcuterie products in the UK, and a byword for quality, ironically at a time when, especially in restaurants and supermarkets, we are importing charcuterie from Italy of a lesser quality than ever before. The best Italian charcuterie continues to be sensational, of course, but we are relatively unlikely to see it in the UK. In addition, we are also relatively unlikely to see Italian charcuterie

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

The importance of using nothing but the finest Italian tomatoes to recreate your favourite dishes cannot be understated if you want a truly authentic experience, insists Jess Bartkowiak, brand manager for Mutti, Italy's best-selling brand of tomatoes [IRI Infoscan Census January-December 2017 (volume and value share for Chopped Tomatoes, Tomato Puree, Peeled Tomatoes, Tomato Paste)].

Mutti works with trusted farmers in the Parma region of northern Italy, who each year compete for Mutti's prestigious Pomodorino

D'Oro, which rewards the 40 best supplying farms for commitment in the production of high-quality tomatoes, explains Bartkowiak.

Paying more for its tomatoes – in return for farmers meeting the highest quality parameters – means Mutti buys nothing but the best, whilst a unique processing system means Mutti can guarantee that its finished products have a smoother consistency and that any green or yellow bits of the tomato are rejected.

"All products in the Mutti range are non-GMO, made from 100% Italian tomatoes, grown in 'open air' fields and processed on average within two hours of picking at the height of summer to ensure that only tomatoes

that does not come from factory-farmed, commercial breed pork, often raised in The Netherlands or Denmark. This charcuterie has as much in common with, for example, a long matured, free-range, Italian native breed pig such as the Cinta Senese as a £4 bottle of plonk does with a £40 fine wine. And probably, in fact, with a not dissimilar difference in pricing." Restaurants are now enthusiastically advertising the origins of their charcuterie and many have a slow food ethical philosophy. Cardiff-based The Dusty Knuckle Pizza Company are an active part of the Slow Food Movement and all their ingredients are authentically sourced; they have also travelled extensively in Italy learning their art and bringing their love of Italian food and enthusiasm back to Wales. The popularity of their restaurant (and the simplicity of its menu) is a testament to the way that the UK consumer cares about their food's story. And it is this desire for quality that is resulting in

spaghetti to be stirred into the sauce before serving, rather than sitting, British-style, on the top before being scattered with dried Italian cheese

Interestingly, the British consumer has shunned away from pasta in recent years with sales dropping annually – this had been partly attributed to the rise in spiralisation and the consumer regarding pasta as one of the 'bad' carbs; nothing could be further from the truth, as recent research has demonstrated that when pasta is reheated its impact on blood-sugar is reduced considerably, bringing it well in-line with the lower GI products touted as 'better for health'. The variety of pasta available in the UK is amazing – whether flavoured – infused with truffles, wild mushrooms, sun-dried tomatoes or squid ink – or regionally shaped, the Strozzapreti from Emilia Romagna or the Ligurian Troife for example – and these artisan products need to be complemented with fine quality sauces. Bottled Italian pasta sauces

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“ Food from the dairy industry can be produced with compassion for our animals, for our people and for our environment. We hope to show that far from being expensive, food produced this way can actually cost us less ”

the buoyancy of the Italian specialist food import market – anyone can visit the supermarket and pick up a packet of salami, but there is salami and there is salami.

PASTA: A UK FAVOURITE

Traditionally, Britain has enjoyed the foods of northern and central Italy; those familiar Parma Hams, Pesto al la Genovese, Chiantis and Parmesan cheeses, one or more of which feature in most British fridges or store-cupboards. Italian cuisine always seems the go-to choice in pubs and restaurants for vegetarian and vegan dishes, although when once vegetarian lasagne ruled the roost it's now more likely to be truffled artichoke risotto. Pasta used to be confined to macaroni, fusilli, spaghetti or penne, but there are now hundreds of varieties and people are understanding the role of pasta in a dish, the nuances of the shapes in conjunction with the regional sauces – on a grass roots level most recipes now call for

also have a good share of the market; many delis stock these as a 'fast food' alternative. Aside from the well-known commercial brands there is a plethora of small producers offering everything from a soffritto (onion, carrot, olive oil and celery) base which is a time-saver and can be customised, to more unfamiliar regional delicacies. Imported tinned fish, such as anchovies and octopus, has always been popular. Their attractive, colourful, and often vintage-style packaging adds to the appeal whilst looking great on the shelves.

CONDIMENTS

Italian condiments, Balsamic vinegars and olive oils have always been at the forefront of exports. Italy exports 92 thousand tons of olive oil annually, the majority being extra-virgin, and in 2016 exports of balsamic vinegar (PDO and PGI) from Modena accounted for 875 million euros. Balsamic vinegars, rather like fine wines,

offering the best taste, colour and texture are used," explains Bartkowiak. The result is a range of products – including Finely Chopped, Peeled and Passata offerings – that is establishing a loyal following and rave reviews through the speciality wholesale and retail channels in the UK.

In addition, Mutti now offers new San Marzano Tomatoes, a premium tomato of designated origin from the Nocerino-Sarnese area near Naples that is high-flavoured and perfect for slow cook recipes such as casseroles and stews. The product is loved by chefs and often featured in cookery programs, including Gino's Italian Escapes, Saturday Kitchen and Great British Bake Off.

"Unlike other brands, Mutti is able to guarantee that all the tomatoes that go into its range have been picked and processed at their peak. Processing and packaging its tomatoes in their optimum condition means Mutti can guarantee a high-quality product all year round for its carefully selected varieties.

"Mutti tomatoes also have a lower content of water than other brands – and also less than fresh tomatoes do – resulting in more savoury products that are richer in taste and aroma, whilst maintaining all the freshness of natural tomatoes. And unlike some competitor brands, they don't contain citric acid, which can severely affect the taste profile of the finished product."



vary considerably in price – while a decent everyday bottle can be found for a few pounds, a 25-year-old example can sell for over £100 per 100ml, and it is a growing market. Whereas once olive oil could only be found as 'standard' or 'extra-virgin', there are now dozens of varieties to choose from, whether required for cooking, drizzling or dipping, filtered and unfiltered – the list goes on – and many British consumers are now as happy to invest in a good bottle of single estate olive oil as they are a good bottle of Port.

SEASONAL

Another area to be explored, when it comes to Italian food, is seasonal specialities and puddings. Take, for example, the delicately-flavoured Panettone or Pandoro; the conical, bell-shaped fruited, spiced and yeasted breads which are sold in distinctive decorative cardboard boxes with ribbon carrying handle.

These are given as tokens of friendship at Christmas in Italy and make excellent seasonal gifts, as do Amaretti and Ratafia biscuits, and biscotti, with their elegant fin de siècle decorative tins and colourful paper wrappers. There are the Tuscan Vin Santos (holy wines) which are often consumed at Easter, Sicilian Cannoli (a ricotta cheese-filled, fried sweet pastry) and the classic puddings, tiramisu and panna cotta, the latter of which is seen with one 'creative twist' or another on almost every gastro-pub menu countrywide, whilst tiramisu remains a real comfort food for many Brits. Many British delis offer Italian hampers at Christmas, affording the opportunity of showcasing their products and introducing new flavours to an eager market.

WHAT'S NEXT?

What future trends will we see? Gianfranco Perri believes that

consumers will be looking for more vegan-friendly options, high protein/ancient grain pastas, products with associated health benefits and gluten-free alternatives, with an even greater demand for organic products. Within the Italian food genre trends have come and gone, and in many cases the British put their own stamp on Italian classics: the polenta fashion of the mid-naughties resulted in the trend for polenta fries as a potato alternative, whereas in Italy the traditional 'porridge'-style recipe is more readily used.

There is, of course, the ever-circling prospect of Brexit and its impact on the import industry, but whichever way the axe falls Italian food will always have its place in Britain. If taxes are increased and imports restricted, it will again become a true 'speciality' food, more expensive and considered a luxury choice.

PARTNER CONTENT



AUTHENTIC ITALIAN BAKING COMES TO LONDON

Rocco Tanzarella, director of Wimbledon's La Bottega del Pane, introduces his business bringing genuine Italian bakes to the UK

Authentic, freshly-made Italian breads are hard to come by in the UK. Brits' fondness for soft, just-baked focaccia, panettone and traditional Italian loaves may be increasing, but up until 15 years ago our cravings were left unsatisfied. Enter Rocco Tanzarella, company director of La Bottega del Pane – a Wimbledon-based Italian bakery and jewel in the crown of Italian food in the UK.

"It all began with an iconic Italian bread – pane altamura – 15 years ago," Rocco explains. "Up until then you couldn't find this type of bread in the UK, and as far as I know we are still the only bakery producing it here." This specialist bread, originating in the city of Altamura in Southern Italy, made using durum wheat flour and a small amount of mother yeast, is DOP-accredited, meaning that while La Bottega del Pane's recipe is as close to the original as you can get, it cannot share the same name. It's instantly recognisable thanks to its impressive size, and boasts a satisfying crust – no wonder, then, that it has been used on the menu for the Royal Parks (through Collici, contractors of the Royal Parks) since it was introduced last year by acclaimed chef, Theo Randall. The business also produces Apulian focaccia – another revered Italian bread which has been as popular with Rocco's London customers as it is across the Italian region it calls home.

Next came La Bottega del Pane's now-famous panettone – famous because, unlike every other panettone you'll see on UK shelves, it's been freshly-made at the Wimbledon bakery rather than in Italy (and as such contains no preservatives) – which was first created eight years ago. What started out as a small-scale operation has become a renowned arm of the business which freshly bakes several hundred to a few thousand panettoni every festive season. Here Rocco, formerly a successful fashion photographer, indulges his creative side.

For one of the most popular incarnations of his famous panettone, Rocco himself carried out research to ensure that the bakery only utilised the best ingredients possible; sourcing jumbo sultanas from Spain, Sicilian orange peel and fico dottato – a small fig with fewer seeds than more readily-available varieties and a unique flavour, which is only available from Southern Spain or Italy's Calabria region. These exclusive figs are soaked in rum for several weeks before combining with the rest of the ingredients and an 85% chocolate to create a truly indulgent treat.

Every year, Rocco and his team create a different panettone recipe; two years ago they launched an eye-catching charcoal variation with gold leaf, and last year it was the turn of a delicious combination of blueberry, blackberry and raspberry with white chocolate. This year's variation, Mandorlato, showcases Sicilian almonds sourced from the coastal town of Avola. Very large, flat and rich in flavour, La Bottega del Pane has encapsulated the very best of this high quality nut in its delicious bread. Rocco's work with Theo Randall has moved into panettone, too, with a Gin Mare-infused option now exclusively available across all Harvey Nichols stores.

Today La Bottega del Pane supplies Theo Randall's restaurants across London, as well as Michelin-starred restaurants including River Café, Milos, Manicomio Group, Novikov and Olivo Restaurant Group – bringing deliciously freshly-made authentic Italian baked products to lovers of Italian food in the UK.

If you're interested in an authentic taste of Italy created in the heart of London, visit labottegadelpane.co.uk or email rocco@labottegadelpane.co.uk

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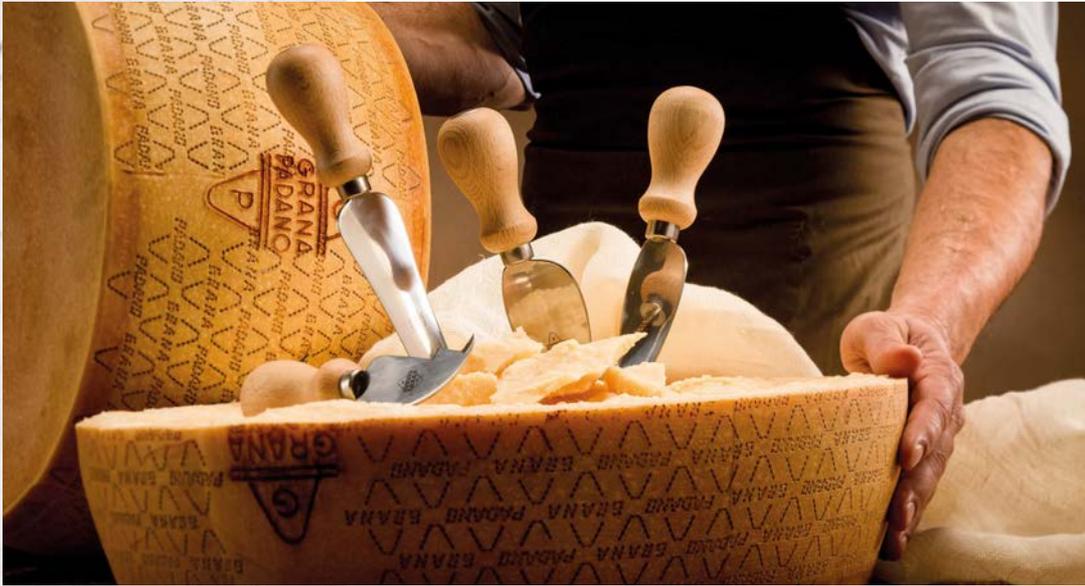
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It may be a stalwart of the cheese counter, but how much do you know about this ever-popular cheese?





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LINK WITH THE TERRITORY

All the products are obtained using traditional methods. The bond between the product and the land create special characteristics in each product

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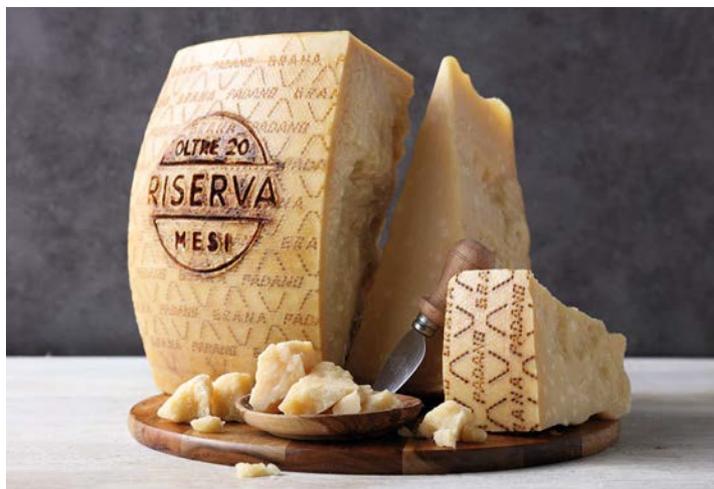
Respect for traditional production methods and preservation of the typical characteristics of the product. Retailers should explain this information to their customers in order to clarify the difference in cost and value

Time is an essential ingredient in the production of Grana Padano. As the cheese matures, the aromas and flavours evolve. There are three different vintages of the cheese: Grana Padano (aged between nine and 16 months), Grana Padano 'over 16 months,' and Grana Padano 'Riserva' (over 20 months). The different maturation stages give it a versatility that allows it to taste great with a wide variety of wines and recipes.

Strict controls are carried out throughout the entire production chain by members of the Grana Padano Protection Consortium, dedicated to protecting and promoting the product. Only the cheese wheels which have been aged for a minimum of 9 months and have passed the strict quality controls, to ensure that they meet the highest quality standards, receive the Grana Padano fire-branded mark, grading them as PDO products.

This fire-branding and the marks of origin which can be found all around the rind are placed on the wheel at "birth". These marks of origin contain information which allow each wheel to be traced to its production area, even down to the farmer that produced the milk. Grana Padano is recognised as a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) product, protected by the Italian State and European Union. Its PDO status means that it is exclusively linked to the particular area in Northern Italy, the Pianura Padana (Po River Valley), where it is produced. Each wheel is therefore inseparable from the climate, culture, and people that create it. This ensures the ultimate in quality, authenticity and traceability, making it the world's best-selling PDO product.

This in turn means that manufacturers and retailers are able to add value to their produce by promoting PDO cheeses and emphasising the unique



characteristics, history and quality of each, much in the same way as wine is promoted to consumers. The firebranding can be maximised by retailers in order to hero this PDO status. The PDO status guarantees the various levels of the production process: origin, source of raw materials, location, and traditional quality of the production process.

How to care for Grana Padano PDO

Grana Padano should be stored in the least cold part of the fridge, where the temperature is normally

Real Grana Padano PDO can be recognised by the small diamond lozenges on its rind (the marks of origin). To ensure that your cheese is genuine, always check there is some rind on the piece you are buying

GENUINE OR FAKE?



● Grana Padano has been a PDO-accredited cheese since 1996 and is now the best-selling PDO cheese in the world

● It takes 15 litres of naturally partially-skimmed milk to produce 1kg of Grana Padano PDO. 30g of Grana Padano PDO contains the same nutritional value as approximately half a litre of milk (one pint)

● 50g of Grana Padano PDO provides 600mg of calcium – 60% of the daily requirement for adults, 50% of an adolescent's requirement

● Grana Padano is lactose-free due to the characteristics of its production and ageing process. It contains a Galactose content of less than 10mg per 100g. Grana Padano also contains important proteins, iron, vitamins and minerals

DID U KNOW

around 6°C. In this case it is advisable not to put cheeses of different flavours and aromas together to prevent the stronger and more penetrating cheeses from contaminating those with more delicate characteristics. It is also advisable to wrap Grana Padano in good quality Clingfilm or a freezer bag.

Serving suggestions

Grana Padano is best served on its own with salad or as a snack and is also delicious when served grated or flaked with risotto, pasta, fish and meat.

If enjoyed as an aperitivo, ideal wine matchings are:

- Grana Padano with young, fresh, and light white wines such as Pinot Blanc
- Grana Padano 'over 16 months' with slightly tannic red wines such as Bardolino or Valpolicella
- Grana Padano Riserva 'over 20 months' with strong red wines such as Barolo, or fortified wine such as Moscato



AN ITALIAN ICON FROM 1000AD TO TODAY

The Benedictine monks changed the course of Italian history and culinary expertise when, centuries ago, they created Grana Padano cheese. It was shortly after 1100AD and hunger was widespread – no resources from the land or from cattle could be wasted. The monks who farmed the land around the Po Valley in Northern Italy needed a clever solution to preserve the milk they didn't use right away. That solution was a long-ripened hard cheese called Grana Padano, named 'Grana' because of its grainy structure and "Padano" from the production area, Pianura Padana. This delicacy is still produced following the traditional methods that the monks developed back then. It is now ingrained in Italian cooking.



HOT DRINKS TODAY

Social media, changing tastes and international trends all play a part in this evolving sector

The hot drinks market is ever evolving, with different consumer needs leading the way towards trends. Turmeric lattes have been circling cafés and Instagram for the past year with sales of the 'super-spice' rising 765% in the past two years, but there is always new innovation out there apart from the golden milk. If anything, the popularity of the turmeric latte can be seen as an encapsulation of three UK consumer tendencies: health consciousness, the search for variety and an expanding love of coffee. According to research by Market Watch, 64% of consumers around the globe regularly consume hot drinks, and they are looking for offerings that are innovating, exciting, functional and suited to their varied lifestyles.

Something old, something new

The UK is, traditionally, a nation of tea-drinkers, with the standard cuppa an icon of British culture. However, volume sales of ordinary tea bags are down, with competition from alternatives like coffee eating away at sales, and Brits are drinking a reported 870 million fewer cups of tea per year.

While the standard builder's brew is losing out in the public gaze, tea is in no way disappearing from the hot drinks scene. Rather than getting stuck watching sales dwindle, many tea brands have found a new way of presenting the British classic: variety. Sales of green tea, herbal tea, fruit tea have coming booming onto the market, suiting the tastes

of Brits aged 25+, 37% of whom say they have drunk five to six different kinds of tea at home or at work in the past month (compared to the 3% aged 55+ who said the same), according to research by Mintel. Variety provides businesses with an opportunity to expand their offering and capitalise on seasonality, while modern tea drinkers appreciate the range. According to co-founder of the alcoholic tea brand NovelTea, Vincent Efferoth, "Here in the UK you have a saying, with good reason, that everyone has a different cuppa, and often that depends on how you feel. The tea you have before you go to bed, something herbal or fruity, will be different to the one you have at the start of the day – perhaps a black or green tea to get your caffeine for

that day – which is different to the chamomile you might have when you're feeling unwell."

Coffee, on the other hand, has seen wild market success in the UK recently, with four in five British adults drinking coffee at home, according to Mintel. Anita Winter, Mintel research analyst said, "Brits have become a country of coffee drinkers. While instant coffee is the nation's most favoured variety, the popularity of artisan coffee shops has helped some coffee drinkers, especially younger ones, to regard themselves as coffee connoisseurs. Many consumers are even ashamed to give their guests the instant version, perhaps because they believe that some instant coffee is cheaper and therefore inferior." British home coffee-makers are starting to branch out, with speciality coffee firmly established in the UK market. As the market expands, so does its offering, with green bean coffee from Feel Good Coffee making its way onto the scene as a new take on what has quickly become a seen-everywhere beverage. Following the popularity of the raw trend, these unroasted beans provide that sought-after caffeine hit without losing the natural antioxidants in coffee, which are generally lost in the roasting process.

Reinventing classics

Whether you walk down a supermarket aisle or read a yearly report, you're bound to notice the unflappable rise of veganism. While full-time vegans are up in their numbers, with 3.5 million vegans in the UK at present, consumers who are increasingly aware of their health and carbon footprint are engaging with flexitarian diets – reduced meat and dairy consumption – with data by Kantar Worldpanel indicating a rise over the past two years in 'part-time vegetarians' of 2.2 million Britons. Milk used in hot drinks has been revolutionised by the needs of these two camps, with consumers seeking dairy-free alternatives to splash into their morning latte. While products like soy, coconut and almond milk have made a place for themselves in the market, oat milk

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is edging its way in, too. Popular in the US for its more environmental-leaning (it requires far fewer gallons of water to produce than almond milk) and for its dairy-like texture that allows professional and home baristas to craft satisfying lattes, it has made a move into the UK market.

The world of lattes remains engaging and ever-evolving. Most recently, Super-Lattes have evolved past turmeric lattes, with consumers still seeking beverages that provide nutrition as well as flavour in new and interesting ways. Zuma has a beetroot powder on the market, which can be used to make the newly-popular beetroot lattes, whose bright pink colour attracts social media users.

Meanwhile, with nutrition at the forefront of the modern consumer's mind, consumers are looking for sugar alternatives. According to Mintel, more than half of Britons aged 25-34 say flavoured teas are a good alternative to sugary drinks. Modern tea blends are available that imitate well-loved desserts like Teapigs' popcorn tea or classic flavours like Ace Tea's Breakfast Marmalade.

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COOKING SAUCES

Convenience, flavour and excitement: just three of the things consumers are looking for when shopping for food. Thankfully, the new breed of cooking sauces offer all of this and more

Five years ago, you'd think of cooking sauces and your mind would travel to a supermarket aisle groaning with preservative and sugar-laden jars of the old classics: tomato and basil, korma and maybe a spinach and ricotta if you were lucky. These days the options are much wider – the industry has listened to consumer desires, and is no longer making them choose between convenience and good-tasting, high quality options. Inspiration is coming from further afield, too; matriarch of the food industry Mary Berry has stepped away from traditional British and Continental flavours to offer such flavour combinations as mango, lime and chilli, for example, and the number of brands in the speciality sector stocking independents with quality, fresh, exciting options to tempt shoppers' tastebuds is not to be sniffed at.

Producing cooking sauces is no longer simply a box-ticking exercise for speciality brands – it's not just a case of convenience beats all, instead, flavour and quality are non-negotiables; just because a consumer is low on time doesn't mean they're willing to settle for second-best. One such brand bringing their own love of flavour to their products is Boom Kitchen, a Devon-based business whose eye-catching packaging and punchy flavours have attracted interest from convenience-seeking foodies since launch. James Doel, co-founder of Boom Kitchen explains, "Carl and I set up Boom Kitchen to help people enjoy healthy, tasty curries. For us, cooking with fresh spices is one of life's great pleasures so we wanted to make this an integral part of our product. We developed our curry kit format in 2012 under the influence and partly inspired by the craft beer we were drinking. Craft beer was experiencing a renaissance at the time and we thought the curry

world was overdue a product that embraced the art of crafting a good curry.

"We knew the secret behind a restaurant-quality curry lay beyond just a spice mix," he continues. "Every Indian restaurant has a base onion gravy that takes the best part of half a day to prep and cook from scratch – this is what we call out Boom Base. In addition to Boom Base every recipe comes with its own spice mix then sundries such as dried chillies, coconut or whole spices." Convenience is at the heart of the range, but there's a satisfying involvement, too. "Our kits can be cooked and prepped in the same time as it takes to re-heat a jar but that's where the similarity ends," says James. "There's a gulf when it comes to the fresh flavours, and sense of

culinary achievement you experience, simply by chopping a clove of garlic, squirting some tomato puree and combining with fresh spices and a splash of Boom Base." This combination of fresh flavours, quality, convenience and a sense of culinary accomplishment appears to be at the heart of the new breed of cooking sauces – long may it continue.

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Mary Berry's has added a versatile and warming Mango, Lime & Chilli Sauce to its line-up. The fresh sweet flavour of mango is fused with a dash of lime and a subtle hint of chilli to create this delicious dressing. Try drizzled over chicken salads or as a marinade on fish.

And returning to the Mary Berry's range is Lemon & Thyme Sauce, complete with a fresh new look and smaller pack size. Perfect with chicken, fish or steak, this versatile sauce can be used as a pour over sauce, a topping for baked potatoes, pan-fried with chicken or as a marinade or baste. It works very well with salmon and pasta.



5 MINUTES WITH... VICTORIA MONAGHAN

founder of Taste Collectiv explains why it's worth taking another look at fresh options

WHAT DO CONSUMERS WANT FROM THEIR COOKING SAUCES?

Consumers buy a cooking sauce primarily for its convenience. However, an increasing number of consumers want more than this.

HOW HAS THIS CHANGED IN THE PAST FEW YEARS?

Consumer are now more conscious of what they eat and therefore aren't prepared to settle for a jarred product, with lots of unnatural ingredients and preservatives. Also if they are splurging in an independent shop, they have a much higher expectation of flavour, which is where fresh really delivers.

YOU SUPPLY A VARIED SELECTION OF SAUCES – WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO DO THIS, RATHER THAN FOCUS ON ONE INTERNATIONAL CUISINE/AUDIENCE?

Our goal is to convert people into eating more fresh food on a weekly basis. Therefore, doing the most popular flavours in a cuisine made more sense than sticking to one and doing more obscure/less popular flavours that would sit on the shelf longer.



WHY SHOULD RETAILERS STEP AWAY FROM AMBIENT SAUCES AND TRY FRESH – IS SHELF LIFE NOT AN ISSUE?

We have designed all our sauces to have a 60 day shelf life with a case size of six. I would argue that a product should be selling that quantity in the six day time frame, to make it a profitable item for its space on the shelf. Also, once people have tasted the difference between something that is fresh versus something that has sat in a jar for two years, the repeat rate will be significantly greater, boosting sales for the retailers.

HOW CAN RETAILERS BOOST SALES OF FRESH SAUCES?

Tastings – ask for a sample to be added to your order and get it out for customers to try. The difference in flavour between fresh and ambient is huge. Also, the consumer is more aware of nasty ingredients and preservatives than ever. Fresh produce doesn't have this issue, and food without all the additives is better all round. Highlighting this to their customers would be an easy win!

“ Consumers associate non-chilled sauces with traits such as ‘rich in flavour’ and ‘time-saving’, but also ‘processed’, ‘high in sugar’ and ‘unhealthy’ ”

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AMI DEANE,
TYNE CHEESE

ELLIE PHOEBE
BROWN, KINDA CO.

“A growing sector”

Tyne Cheese Ltd is a small business run by myself and my husband, based in the North East of England. Our dedicated staff make each product by hand, using organic cashew nuts. All our products are cultured and aged to give an authentic ‘cheesy’ tang. They are also gluten-free, soya-free, GMO-free and raw vegan. We pride ourselves on the few ingredients in each product, all of which are 100% natural and preservative-free. We try to use organic ingredients where possible and try to use only eco-friendly packaging, with our signature poplar wood boxes being a major keystone to our brand.

When I first launched Tyne Cheese in Nov 2014, there were no other artisan vegan ‘cheese’ companies in the UK currently trading. The only vegan cheese alternatives available were highly processed soya or coconut oil-based cheeses that attempted to replicate a melty dairy cheese. I wanted to do something different; to create a healthy cultured vegan cheese that people could enjoy as part of a cheeseboard with that authentic cheesy tang. Over the years we have changed our recipes and flavour range to make our products more accessible to customers with certain allergies and dietary requirements, and are continuing to research new production methods and ingredients that will allow us to cater for even more allergy-sufferers. In the years since our inception there have been more artisan vegan cheese companies launching, which just goes to show how this market and veganism in general is growing in both popularity and awareness.

If I’m being honest, very few people, other than the ‘hardcore’ vegans of the UK knew anything

about the type of ‘cheese’ we were producing. Cashew-based vegan cheese alternatives were growing in popularity in the US, yet it was still a market that was, in the most part, unexplored. However, despite a general lack of awareness of what our product was, the reception by customers at festivals and our trade customers was phenomenal. When I first created the ‘cheese’ I took it to festivals to gauge interest with samples and was almost immediately taken aback by the level of interest and demand for such a product. I think the UK was more than ready for an artisan vegan cheese alternative to hit the market.

As the vegan cheese alternative industry grows we are realising that veganism in general is rapidly becoming more popular, and we are continuing to expand to try and supply the exponentially increasing demand. Even with such an amazing variety of cheese alternatives on the market our sales are on the up – showing what an amazing market it is to be in today. Back in 2014 when we first launched, the niche industry of artisan vegan cheese alternatives didn’t really exist, so there were a lot of hurdles we had to overcome in terms of legislation and labelling to comply with Food Standards in the UK. Now, we are surprised at how both the market and industry standards have accepted our products, with more competitors popping up every year.

With this increase in availability, it is much harder for any vegan cheese company to stand out. As the market becomes more saturated, businesses will have a challenging road ahead to develop stand out products. We use a combination of our range and uniqueness of flavours, and natural, eye-catching packaging to stay at the front end of the industry and retain our market share.

“A new area of discovery”

Being a vegan cheesemaker is not the career I ever imagined I would have, nor is it an easy one to explain to new people when, inevitably, they ask what it is that I do. People’s reactions all tend to follow similar patterns of surprise and questioning. The initial response is overwhelmingly that a dairy-free cheese can’t possibly taste very good. Not only is this the reaction of omnivores, but vegans too are often similarly unconvinced.

I understand their hesitation. The reason I first began making vegan cheese myself was due to a total inability to find one that I liked when I stopped eating dairy three years ago. I can see how many other consumers will have been left disappointed in the past by promises of a delicious cheese substitute, only to be left with something bland and rubbery.

I’m happy to say that the world of vegan cheese has moved on significantly since I began, and there is now a far greater range of great tasting dairy-free cheeses available; I think this trend for more choice is having an overall positive impact on consumer awareness. Put simply, if a customer has previously tried a good vegan cheese, they will be far more likely to take a risk on trying another one. However, this growth of choice has not been a unanimously positive change for the dairy-free cheese aisle.

The last few years have seen many of the large supermarkets responding to the increased demand for vegan alternatives by launching their own ranges of vegan cheese. Sainsbury’s famously exceeded their estimated sales targets by 300% when they launched their vegan cheese line a few years ago. However, the feedback we constantly hear from customers is that very few of the supermarket

cheese replacements deliver on taste, even if they are more appealing for their lower price.

As an artisan brand our price point does tend to be higher, and there are various reasons for this, sadly none of which involve me driving a Porsche. As a small producer not only are we unable to commit to the huge scales of production that supermarkets are able to utilise, but our base ingredients and manufacturing processes are extremely different. Although you can make dairy-free cheese using a variety of different ingredients, we use nuts as the base for all the Kinda Co. cheeses – currently a mixture of cashews and almonds. Their high fat content makes them an ideal substitution for dairy, while their mild taste acts a blank canvas on which a variety of flavours can be added. In order to achieve the authentic cheesy taste we use traditional cheesemaking methods to culture and ferment our base blend, which is the key to recreating the familiar taste missing from many mass-produced vegan cheeses.

Vegan cheese is such a new area of food discovery and developments are happening at a fast rate. To put it into perspective, there is evidence of humans making dairy cheese as early as 5,500 BCE, while vegan cheese has only been made since the 1970s. However despite this short production history, some impressively innovative products are already available on the shelves of specialist shops. Vegan cheese companies are now making authentic mould-ripened Camemberts, and many of the vegan cheese brands in the US are further ahead than the UK when it comes to mimicking an authentic cheesy flavour in mass-produced products. With the field of vegan cheese constantly evolving and growing, I for one will be watching with fascination where it will take us next.

Cheese Talk

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CHEESE UNCUT

News, opinion and comment from dairy insiders

Errington Cheese reopens its doors

Having won its lengthy legal battle with South Lanarkshire Council, cheesemaker Errington Cheese welcomed members of the public to its farm on Great British Cheese Day (October 21st) to taste the first batch of Dunsyre Blue – made with organic raw milk sourced from sustainable East Ayrshire-based supplier, Mossgiel Farm.

Visitors were offered a tour of the working farm, including its production facilities and Corra Linn Maturing Room, and watched live demonstrations of the production process of Dunsyre Blue. They were also given the chance to try the cheesemaker's award-winning produce.

For the past two years Errington has been in dispute with South

Lanarkshire Council, which following an apparent link with E.coli 0157 wanted to dispose of the small business's entire stock of cheese. The cheesemaker has since been cleared of breaching food hygiene regulations, but sales have dropped to 25% of 2016's figures. As a result, Errington has recently been forced to lay off its two remaining employees.

Selina Cairns, director at Errington Cheese said: "It has undoubtedly been the most difficult

period in the company's 36-year history, enduring an expensive legal battle which could have led to our demise.

"The courts ultimately ruled in our favour but even though we were completely cleared of breaching food hygiene regulations, the issue is far from resolved. The knock-on effect on the operation has been extremely detrimental, faced with a drop in sales and the majority of cash reserves being ploughed into covering legal costs. We regrettably had to make staff redundant and are still fighting to reclaim fees from the local authority. This is essential if we are to re-employ our loyal workforce or get back to sustainable production and boost sales levels.

“ Despite these challenges the focus remains on what we do best, sustainably producing an enticing selection of high-quality artisan cheese ”



CHEESE FACT FILE: CHAOURCE AOC

- **Country of origin:** France
- **Region:** Aube, Yonne
- **Milk:** cow's
- **Rennet:** animal
- **Type:** soft, bloomy-rinded
- **Texture:** creamy beneath the rind, crumbly in the centre
- **Taste:** buttery, milky, salty
- **Aged:** two to four weeks

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SODIAL

Yorkshire Producers Join Forces

Iconic Yorkshire producers Wensleydale Creamery and Masons Yorkshire Gin have joined forces to create a new cheese ideal for the upcoming festive season: Yorkshire Wensleydale with Caramelised Orange & Masons Yorkshire Gin Cheese.

The new variety has been created in response to the 'gin renaissance', with the creamy, crumbly and flavourful Yorkshire Wensleydale perfectly pairing with the citrusy notes of the gin's caramelised orange flavour.

David Hartley, MD of the Wensleydale Creamery said, "We

are delighted to have partnered with another fantastic Yorkshire brand to showcase the very best of our region. In times of gin renaissance, we could not pass on an opportunity to treat our customers to a special blend of our own Yorkshire Wensleydale with the fantastic Masons Yorkshire Gin. We hope our fans will love it as much as we do."

Cathy Mason, founder of Masons Yorkshire Gin said, "We are so excited about the partnership between Masons and Wensleydale Creamery. Having been a fan of Yorkshire Wensleydale for many



years, we never imagined one day we would be bringing our flavours together to produce an innovative gin-inspired blend of the Creamery's delicious cheese!"



Traces of cheese have been found on 7,200-year-old pottery from Neolithic villages along Croatia's Dalmatian coast. Before this discovery, the earliest cheese could be traced back to was the Bronze Age. The discovered cheese is as around the same age as some Polish cheese residue that was discovered a few

years ago, and many thousands of years older than the cheese found in Egypt earlier in the summer. Before this, the earliest signs of the fod could be traced to no earlier than the Bronze age, meaning this could be a sign of the earliest trace of cheesemaking in the whole of the Mediterranean. As a good source of nutrients for children, milk is theorised by scientists to have been an important part of children's diets back in early farming populations, when infant mortality was high. However, research suggests that adults of the time likely couldn't digest lactose. Cheese-making of the era may have been efforts to use fermentation to decrease the amount of lactose in milk so adults could also nutritionally benefit from dairy, suggests the Smithsonian publication.

HARD CONTINENTAL CHEESE HAS SEEN A 6% INCREASE IN VOLUME SALES IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, WHILE SOFT CONTINENTAL CHEESE HAS SEEN A 6.4% GROWTH

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"In praise of the PDOs – Defra, sort it PDQ!"

When I first travelled to the USA in the 1970s, I was amazed to see "Californian Champagne". I had presumed that champagne always came from France. Describing a sparkling wine in this way felt as counter-intuitive as Korean Riesling. Over time, as a consumer, I appreciated the assurance I gained from knowing that a potential purchase benefited from AoC, PGI, PDO or whichever controls were attached to the produce.

Tight controls on the production of specific British cheeses started to be set in law in 1966, when Blue Stilton gained a certification Trade Mark. Later accepted as a PDO (the EU's Protected Designation of Origin), the precise geographic area and the defined making process have caused various cheeses to fail in their hope of recognition as a Blue Stilton, notably Stichelton, and even cheeses made in the village of Stilton itself. Defining significant cheeses in this way is more than a simple branding exercise. A PDO, for example, can be precise on type of milk and breed of animal used as well as location and method. It transcends the definition of a single producer, but sets stringent criteria that could still be met by entrants to the market, if they are prepared to follow them exactly.

While these controls give protection to manufacturers and confidence to consumers, there's still a vast number of people who will still describe every blue cheese as a Stilton. PDOs make no difference to such folk. However, true connoisseurs love discovering the nuanced differences between

the various producers of Stilton. It's not just applicable to Stilton, though – other types of cheese have gained protection, from traditional varieties, such as Single Gloucester, to newly developed cheeses, where the producer has sought to defend the cheese type that they had developed from Johnny-come-lately competition. One such was Dovedale PDO. Developed by Dairy Crest's Hartington Cheese, production stopped on that site's closure in 2009. The cheese had a following, however, and to meet that demand, Dovedale was resurrected. One producer, Hartington Creamery, uses the original recipe; furthermore, their Dovedale is made by the same cheesemakers who crafted the earlier cheese. It's a beautiful soft, almost sweet blue and I'm very glad to have made its acquaintance.

Traditional cheeses can die out, though. There was a famous BBC2 programme in the 1970s, where the presenter looked for authentic Dorset Blue Vinney. Unable to find it, he searched high and low until he met a 'bloke in a pub car park' who sold him what he claimed to be Vinney, but was later understood to be rejected Stilton! Later, Mike Davies resurrected Dorset Blue Vinney (no 'e') producing a fine cheese and gaining protected status.

If cheesemakers are to continue to be able to sell in Europe and more widely, we need a mutually recognised system that protects both consumers and the manufacturers from second-rate pass-offs. Britain's cheese industry is flourishing and diverse, and it deserves a recognition programme to keep it that way.

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RISE OF THE BLUES

With British Blue Cheese growing in stature around the world, John Bensalhia discovers the secrets of its appeal

British cheese producers have reasons to be cheerful. In a report by The Guardian, statistics from HMRC found that the value of cheese exports rose by 23% in 2017 to £615m. The report cited impressive results for cheese exports to both the Philippines (an increase of 27%) and China (which saw a leap from 2015's exports of 49 tonnes worth of cheese to 786 tonnes in 2017).

While there are a number of reasons for this surge in interest (eg: devaluation of the currency), different attitudes in countries around the world are creating a positive rise in demand for British cheese. A good example of this is the Blue Cheese, with Stilton being the sector to see the fastest growth. It's a kind of cheese that the report says isn't so easy to source in countries such as France, which are taking more notice of quality British cheeses.

The reputation of British Blue Cheeses around the world is also

definitely on the up. Philip Stansfield, owner and founder of the Cornish Cheese Company recalls the interest in Cornish Blue from food fairs around the world. "In the last year we have been to Food Fairs in California and New York and have witnessed a great deal of interest in Cornish Blue. We anticipate a significant growth in exports over the next two to three years as cheese lovers around the world continue their appreciation of British Artisan Blue Cheeses such as Cornish Blue."

Mark Hardy, director of Sussex High Weald Dairy Ltd, notes that positive global reaction to British Blue Cheese can be attributed to the wide range of products on offer. "British Blue Cheese has a great reputation around the world, if nothing else, just for the sheer diversity of types now available, made from all four types of milk."

While The Fine Cheese Company has found that British Blue Cheese is famous all around the world, one name is at the front of everyone's



mind. "It is always Stilton," says Ruth Raskin, The Fine Cheese Company's Cheese Care Manager. "In some countries, the cheese enthusiasts we meet will even name the Stilton. Colston Bassett is a big favourite, and deservedly so."

Colston Bassett Stilton is top of the The Fine Cheese Company's list of best-selling Blue Cheeses. Ruth Raskin explains that the reason for this is that it is a consistently excellent cheese. "People know they are in safe hands when they choose it for their cheeseboard. The texture

is sublime, so rich and creamy, and the blue veining brings a beautifully balanced gentle spice."

"As a maker of PDO Stilton, we are fortunate that our cheese is widely recognised internationally, and we continue to grow our export sales," says Billy Kevan, Dairy Manager, Colston Bassett. "In the past few years, there have been a lot of new Blue Cheeses emerging on the UK market. For these smaller, less established producers it can be difficult to gain a presence on the world stage."

Success at international competitions can help. "For Colston Bassett, our award wins have help to showcase our consistently high standard of cheesemaking: something notoriously difficult to achieve with Blue Cheese."

Wide appeal

Colston Bassett Dairy produces Stilton and Shropshire Blue. "Both cheeses are made with milk sourced from member farmers, located within 1.5 mile radius of the dairy," says Billy. "By maintaining traditional making practices such as hand ladling the curds, we ensure exceptional quality and consistency. It's these attributes that have enabled us to build a loyal customer base through the independents."

There are other great Blue Cheeses nipping at Colston Bassett's heels. "Bath Blue is the first choice of many of our customers," says Ruth Raskin. "And Beauvale is popular with those looking for a softer, gentler style of Blue Cheese."

Cornish Blue is the main headline at the Cornish Cheese Company. Philip Stansfield attributes its ever increasing popularity is down to its mild, creamy taste. "Many people have a love / hate relationship with Blue Cheese but we like to think that Cornish Blue appeals to those who wouldn't normally consider a Blue Cheese."

The same principle applies to Sussex High Weald Dairy's Brighton Blue: an award winning, mellow Blue Cheese that the Dairy has been

making for over six years. "it is now one of our best selling cheeses," says Mark Hardy. "It is a light-tasting, summer-eating blue, not too strong or bitter, great for those customers who say that they do not like blue cheese." The Brighton Blue won a Super Gold rating at the 2017 World Cheese Awards as well as a Gold at Nantwich, proving to be one of the most popular Blue Cheeses in the South East.

The latest Blue Cheese offering from the Cornish Cheese Company has also won major acclaim and fast sales in a short space of time. Launched in 2017, the Cornish Nanny is a rare example of Blue Goat's Cheese. "We have been surprised by how quickly sales have grown, clearly helped by winning Gold at the International Cheese awards in both 2017 and 2018," says Philip Stansfield. "Blue goat's cheeses are quite rare so we are looking forward to continued growth in sales."

Happy discoveries

One of the joys of the cheese industry is making brand new discoveries. "There are so many talented new cheesemakers starting up now," says Ruth Raskin.

One example of a happy discovery made by The Fine Cheese Company is Burt's Blue. "Claire Burt makes this rich, soft Blue Cheese in Cheshire, but it has started to travel far afield," explains Ruth. "It's a regular on the orders we send to Australia."

An exciting new cheese is Renegade Monk made by Marcus Fergusson. Ruth says that although it is made with blue cultures, it is often vein-less when ripe, as Marcus develops its silky paste through regular washing. "Marcus started making only 200 cheeses a week, so Renegade Monk was heavily rationed, but many of our overseas customers have already tried it and are looking forward to putting it on their shelves once Marcus has finished building his new, larger cheesemaking facilities."

Also new to The Fine Cheese



as is done with Sparkenhoe Red Leicester,” says Ruth. “This gives the cheese its glorious colour. The paste ranges from a blush, peach tone to a deeper hue next to the blue veins, as the curd begins to break down. The taste is buttery and mellow with a gentle spice to finish.”

While the Sparkenhoe Blues are in their infancy, The Fine Cheese Company has high hopes for their future. “They have been welcomed with open mouths by the customers who have tasted them. The Shropshire Blue was a big hit with the international crowd at Salone del Gusto in Turin in September and the French at SIAL in Paris were just as enthusiastic.”

In our multicultural society, let’s not forget that other countries’ Blue Cheeses continue to hold plenty of appeal. Picos de Europa is one of Brindisa’s most popular Spanish Blue Cheeses. “It’s a real all-rounder, because it is visually interesting with its distinctive maple leaf wrapped exterior and dense blue veining,” says James Robinson, Product Trainer, Brindisa. “Made with a blend of cows’ and goats’ milk, it has a creamy, mushroomy aroma, with a nutty and sometimes spicy flavour. Its third major selling point is that, for a cheese of its quality, Picos de Europa remains competitively priced.”

Brindisa’s most recent addition, Peñoceo, is a goats’ milk cheese from the company’s own supplier, La Peral. “Peñoceo is the latest cheese from a third generation cheese-making family, based in Asturias,” says James. “This is one of the regions known as ‘Green Spain’ because of the abundance of pasture for grazing. La Peral has a great reputation, so this cheese has been holding its own alongside more established Spanish blues.”

Enduring appeal

So what is behind the enduring appeal of Blue Cheese? Mark Hardy says that the popularity is in the complexity of the taste. “There are so many styles out there now, it’s just a question of finding the one you prefer as

a consumer.”

As an all-round cheese, Philip Stansfield concludes that Cornish Blue offers a taste that appeals to everyone. “For Cornish Blue the appeal is the mild, creamy taste as well as the provenance. All the milk that goes into Cornish Blue is produced on our farm on the edge of Bodmin Moor by our herd of Holstein Friesians.”

“Many blue cheeses don’t appeal to families as they have a big blue metallic hit but Cornish Blue has a full flavour which makes it much more appealing as an all-round cheese.”

Philip adds that another reason for blue cheese’s popularity is that it was created naturally and remains traditional, unlike many other cheeses which have recently gone down the additive route.

“Blue cheeses tend to have big personalities!” comments James Robinson. “They combine salt, spice, and creaminess to create bold flavour profiles which really stand out.”

James adds that blue cheese is surprisingly versatile and great for pairing with fruit, nuts, honey and a range of drinks. “In the UK, we tend to grow up with Stilton at Christmas – which sparks consumers’ interest to explore blue alternatives. No cheese board is complete without a quality Blue Cheese and retailers

should provide a number of British and Continental options to showcase their variety.”

Billy Kevan agrees that the association between Stilton and Christmas remains strong, with the Blue Cheese being an ingrained part of festive dining traditions. “However, we continue to encourage consumers to try our cheese throughout the year and in a variety of different ways. This has included the development of two recipe booklets that consider seasonality or international inspired flavours to help people look beyond the obvious.”

“Blue cheese is indispensable to many of our customers,” says Ruth Raskin. “A cheeseboard with no blue cheese would be bereft, a sacrilege even. It is the pinnacle of the board. Those blue veins bring flavours that no other cheese can. The delight of tasting the different tones that the cheese boasts is not one that many cheese enthusiasts would wish to miss.” “The rind may influence the flavour, bringing earthy or perhaps savoury aspects, while the creamy paste, broken down by the moulds growing through the channels left by piercing, may have an altogether sweeter character. And finally, the spicy, mineral tones of the veins themselves bring everything together in glorious harmony.”

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Blacksticks Blue is the original contemporary farmhouse blue cheese, having burst onto the scene in 2004 and unlike anything else in the blue cheese arena. Bright like the early morning sun, creamy in texture with just enough blue bite to tingle your taste buds and keep you coming back for more! Made with love, using traditional handmade methods in our Lancashire family dairy with the rich milk produced by the herds from just over the road at Lower Barker Farm. It is crafted in open vats, then poured into individual moulds, turned by hand and matured under the watchful eyes of our cheese experts. Blacksticks® Blue converts those who’d dislike’ blue cheese, enthral those who do and is equally as amazing sitting on your cheese board or as an addition to your culinary concoctions! It is truly versatile and delicious as well as eye catching.



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STORECUPBOARD STAPLES

It's more than herbs, spices and oils propping up consumers' larders these days – think free-from, ethics and Instagram to woo today's shoppers

British storecupboards have undergone a quiet revolution in the past few years, with exotic superfoods, once-rare grains, gluten-free flours and natural unrefined sweeteners sneaking into shopping baskets. Products with a health halo or celeb-endorsement have vied with slow foods and artisan makes to win consumer spend, bringing cartons of coconut water, turmeric teas and British quinoa into kitchens nationwide. Tastes have changed too, with sour Middle Eastern flavours such as preserved lemons and sumac joining smoky Mexican chillies and fragrant Thai leaves among the standard Indian spices beloved for generations.

Dry goods

No matter the shifting sands of consumer taste, traditional storecupboard staples continue

to perform strongly – especially at this time of year. As another series of Great British Bake Off – that peerless shop window for home baking – leaves our screens, the dry goods industry also feels the benefit of ideal baking weather. "A key home baker driver that's often cited is baking as a relaxing activity or an indoor activity with children when dark outside," says Morwenna Canty of family millers WH Marriage. "The colder months always see an increase in home baking sales; this coincides with inspiration from GBBO but it's also because it's darker outside. During the holiday season there's a real focus on family baking and we see an increase in customers wanting to make traditional bakes: mince pies, Christmas cakes, stollen, yule log and Christmas pudding. Consumers baking from scratch are investing time to make something special,

so are looking for quality ingredients that will give good results."

Canned goods

Sales of canned food face several challenges, according to analysis from Kantar Worldpanel. While price inflation puts a rosy spin on sales figures, consumers are showing a preference for multiples' own-brand. Overall, many categories have seen a drop in both value and volume of sales, with tinned sponge puddings and rice pudding dropping noticeably. "One of the most important factors to keep in mind regarding this category is the general macro-trend around consumers shifting to more healthy eating," says an analyst for Kantar, "with the perception of canned goods not being quite a positive one, considering their long shelf life. Shoppers nowadays prefer fresh alternatives instead."

Bucking the trend, perhaps predictably, are products tailored to a meat-free diet. "Ambient vegetarian products see strongest growth and are definitely on the rise, mainly due to winning new shoppers, and driven by private label," says Kantar's analyst. "Tesco's private label and [Japanese specialist] Yutaka are the ranges growing the fastest. Products in this sector focus on gluten-free and organic variants, which is quite in-line with the 'free-from' trend, flexitarianism, and healthier options that shoppers are drawn to recently."

Free-from

According to data from Kantar Worldpanel, the Free From category is still on an upward trajectory. In fact, its research suggests 37.5% growth of free-from foods in the 52 weeks leading up to 9th September, with a slightly larger pool of shoppers making many more purchases. "In terms of trends we see a lot of allergies and sensitivities," agrees Michelle Potts, co-founder of ambient sauce and stocks maker Potts Partnership. "People look at back of pack a lot, so although many of our products are gluten-free we don't label them as 'free from'. Consumers are well versed in going straight to the back of the pack; they know what they're looking for."

Time-pressed consumers who are nonetheless discerning are an important customer base for Michelle, whose ambient pouches bring convenience to would-be home cooks with high standards but basic skills. "The conversations we've had suggest many people can't cook from scratch, and sauces and gravies tend to be the most intimidating aspect of cooking a meal. Most people can grill or fry – and increasingly they want to have control over where their meat and vegetables come from – but when it comes to bringing real flavour to the dish, they're daunted. Yes, some people just want convenience, something that's quick and easy, but many want a good meal even though they haven't got the confidence or skills."

For Michelle, the method of making standby sauces and stocks is as relevant as the ingredients. "When it comes to ingredients generally the whole of the UK market is quite good," she suggests.



"A few of the mass-produced products might have a few weird things in, but generally – especially compared to somewhere like the US – there's no rubbish in there. The big difference is in the cooking. Our products are cooked in open pans, so we're essentially using home kitchen methods scaled up. The big companies 'retort'; they'll cold-fill their jars with a raw mix and heat them in the retort [an industrial pressure cooker] to stabilise the contents. With this system you do not get a cooked flavour; it's a method designed for efficiency rather than flavour."

Flavour first

Bringing a little more punch to the plate is the raison d'être of spices, storecupboard staples that can transform a dish in an instant. In fact, data from Eurostat puts imports of spices into the EU at their highest in five years, with the



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CBI forecasting that spice sales will continue to grow by five per cent in the period up to 2021. Prices are high, with paprika, ginger, cinnamon and turmeric rising in the last decade. A macro trend for health and wellness has put spices such as turmeric and cinnamon in the spotlight, their active nutrients

and role in holistic medicines are embellishing their culinary use.

The rise and rise of turmeric, based more on the purported benefits of its active curcumin content than flavour, has seen manufacturers scramble their 'new product development' teams. And not without reason; sales of the spice

reportedly skyrocketed by 765% in the 24 months to last May. Analysis by global insights provider Nielsen suggests superfoods continue to hold consumer attention, with 72% of international shoppers expressing intentions to buy foods containing superfood ingredients. Turmeric, chia, goji, black garlic

and maca powder all scored high approval ratings from consumers who are keen to use diet to address their health.

Ethical impulses

Adding a little extra, a feel-good story to warm the heart as well as tempt the tastebuds, is paying dividends for companies with a strong ethical outlook. One is LittlePod, a vanilla-trading enterprise built on a desire to help equatorial subsistence farmers gain an income from their undersized, wonky vanilla pods. LittlePod's vanilla paste, a blend of the whole pod rather than just the seeds, packs 20 pods into a £9.99 tube. "It gives value to all of the farmers' pods, not just the perfect straight ones, and means the home cook can have real vanilla at an affordable price," says founder Janet Sawyer. As with many of the world's most precarious, climate-sensitive crops, vanilla has seen a price escalation as soaring demand has outstripped faltering supply. "A major cyclone in Madagascar in 2017 changed everything," points out Janet. "The plantations were hit just as they were about to have a bumper crop. It takes three and a half years for a vanilla vine to flower, and then it can take as long as 18 months for the pods to be dried, cured and conditioned, so prices doubled overnight."

Ethical shopping has progressed from searching Fairtrade status or other certification logos (though organic sales are reportedly on a gentle rise); today's consumers are looking beyond simple stamps to understand the story behind a brand and its footprint.

"These millennials," says Janet, "in five years' time they'll be the ones with the money in their pockets. Their voices have been heard. The reason we've been able to get into the vanilla market - which isn't transparent and is dominated by companies that have been in Madagascar for 150 years, is that people get it." The aluminium tubes used by LittlePod fit with another macro trend for food storage; the

move away from plastic has caught consumers' imagination and is felt in every corner of the industry. LittlePod now has a six-month lead time when ordering the tubes; other producers have twigged.

For Janet, LittlePod's story is relevant across the food and drink industry. "Consumers want to get involved in companies that are doing what they want them to do: look after this planet we're all on," she says. With PG, surely the gold star staple for British storecupboards, following the example of smaller brands by switching to fully biodegradable bags this year, the smart money is clearly in meeting consumers' demand. With eco and health credentials, not taste, leading so much of the innovation in this category, interesting times surely lay ahead.

TREND FORECAST

● THE INSTAGRAM EFFECT

The competitive art of curating the perfect breakfast bowl, buddha bowl or slice of dessert has fuelled interest in chia seeds, Japanese furikake, and other store cupboard sprinkles. Freeze-dried fruit powders, bright matcha and beetroot-tinted pickles are all popular with 'grammers keen to plate up the prettiest dishes.

● TRAVEL TASTES

Global trends forecasting bible McCormick suggests the rise of street food and remote travel destinations is opening consumers' eyes to new flavours. East African Berbere, masarepa flour, and Caribbean papaya pica are on its hot list.

● THE NEW FUNCTIONALS

The rise of vegan cuisine has seen YouTube stars such as Gaz Oakley encourage a DIY approach to complex meat replacers and dairy free 'cheeses'. Once niche ingredients such as nutritional yeast, agar agar, soya flour and tapioca starch are helping vegans push the boundaries of the plant-based diet.

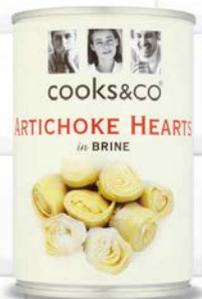


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READY, STEADY COOK

With top-range ingredients and a greater selection than ever before, John Bensalhia samples the latest developments and choices in the ready meal sector

Too much to do. Too little time. Today's time-crunched society throws everything it can at you. Rent, mortgage and bills to pay. A hectic work schedule. A commute that leaves you either stuck for a long time in traffic or on a jam-packed train which is so slow, it may as well be pulled along by Mr Bean in ski boots.

It's a lifestyle that leaves many with maybe just about enough time for a lunchtime sandwich. With that in mind, it's little wonder that ready

meals are big news at the moment. A number of recent reports have looked at ready and convenience meal trends in the UK, and have found that there is plenty of demand for this sector.

Euromonitor says that the UK spends £4.7 billion on ready-to-eat convenience meals each year. Global Data, meanwhile, commented on the general value of prepared meals. While the figure reached \$83.4 billion in 2017, that value is expected to grow to \$99.1 billion by 2021. Out of this, the

biggest and fastest growing sector is the ready meal. The UK is the biggest European market, with a recorded market value of 775,000 tonnes worth of prepared meals in 2017.

The time factor is a notable reason for these statistics. With the cooking already done, after a hard day's work, all the customer has to do is to place the package in the oven or microwave, wait, and then eat.

The statistics also show that the ready meal holds particular appeal for millennials. Global Data reported that a growth of 4.1% is expected for the UK food and grocery convenience market, on account of changes in today's customer shopping habits. Just over a quarter of 25 to 34 year olds were found to do their weekly shopping in a convenience store, as compared to just 5.7% of 55 to 64 year olds. Frozen foods were also found to be a popular choice for millennials. An RBC Capital Markets report claimed that this age group spend 9% more per shopping trip on frozen foods than others in 2017. It's a trend that spreads around the world. For instance, in America, an ERS study discovered that millennials assigned more of their home food budgets to readily prepared foods such as canned soups and deli rotisserie chicken. The millennial



generation is the one to feel the main impact of time pressures, and with a greater hurry to eat on the go, the ready meal is the perfect solution.

A classy deal

But modern ready made meals are higher in quality. Food producers are cottoning on to the fact that there's a high demand for this kind of meal. If time-pressured people can't cook the meals themselves, that doesn't mean that they should have to compromise on the quality. More ready made meals use high

quality ingredients that are cooked to perfection, and it's an approach that's paying off in spades with high acclaim and sales.

Gourmade's wide range of ready meals is a very classy deal indeed. Using the best in quality ingredients, customers can choose from a wide range of dishes. The likes of Gourmade's Beef Bourguignon (prepared with beef, red wine, mushrooms, shallots, thyme and smoked back bacon) and Chicken Tikka Masala (containing slowly marinated chicken in a tomato and coconut cream sauce) showcase

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that the quality is as high as possible, new recipe ideas are tested by an independent taste panel of consumers.

New spin

The Everdine ready meals put a new spin on traditional consumables. Instead of the traditional fish and chips in a greasy newspaper wrapper, Everdine's Quinoa-crust fish and chips is a more elegant take on this old favourite. Using healthy options such as flaky white fish topped off with crispy quinoa, sweet potato chips and chunky pea purée, it's a good example of how much thought goes into ready meals, 21st century-style. Everdine's Lamb Hotpot also provides a unique take on the conventional classic, using ingredients such as crisp slices of turnip and beetroot that help keep the lamb juicy and tender. Many more of Everdine's ready meals bely the old-fashioned opinion that this kind of dinner is a quick, easy option to be slurped down in front of the TV. It's a thoughtfully prepared and conceived treat that can be enjoyed as a restaurant-style meal.

Wiltshire Farm Foods proves that when it comes to choice, there's something for everyone with modern ready made meals. The company offers meat dishes made with chicken and turkey, pork, beef, lamb and fish. Indian, Chinese and Italian dishes are open to customers who want a bit of culture in their supper. Feeling like a smaller portion of food? Mini Meals will do the job. Or a great big meal? Then Hearty Meals will fill you up. The ready meal isn't just confined to dinner, with breakfast options also available. Delicious soup flavours line up tomato, vegetable, chicken and vegetable, pea and ham, and potato and leek.

Food manufacturers are also savvy to producing specially packaged ready meals. Wiltshire Farm Foods offers a range of menu packs. These function as introductions to the kinds of meals

available, and include 7 Day Purée Classic and Extra Tender options, as well as an Easy Order Menu, and for those who find that the 25th December main meal is a bit beyond their reach, there's a Christmas Selection. Gourmade, meanwhile, boasts a range of ready meal hampers: The Classics, Just Desserts, Veggie and Free From Gluten.

Healthy options

The latter options raise a growing trend with today's ready meal options. More food producers are providing healthier options than ever before. Specific requirements such as vegetarianism and gluten-free are being taken into account.

But are conventional supermarkets meeting these needs? Research from Eating Better (a member of Sustain) suggested that this isn't the case. The report claims that supermarket ready meals are not catering for vegetarian and "meat-conscious" customers. Three quarters of 1,350 ready meals from 10 of the chief supermarket retailers found that meat was the main ingredient, while only 3% contained plant-based choices that don't include meats, fish, or dairy products. However, Tesco's Wicked Kitchen range helps to redress the balance: a 20-strong collection of vegan ready meals and food to go items, such as BBQ Butternut Mac and Cauli, Bhaji and Coconut Rice.

Vegan options are open to those wanting a ready meal. The Plantiful Food Company offers a selection of new dishes that are 100% vegan. Completely free of additives and preservatives, the dishes are accessible to everyone, packaged in a microwaveable pot.

The range also takes gluten-free requirements into consideration. Selections like Gluten-Free Creamy Mac with Green Peas and Coronation Chickpea 5-A-Day-Pot are both gluten and soya-free. There's a fantastic spread of vegetables and ingredients in

meals such as the Asian Teriyaki 5-A-Day-Pot: edamame beans, broccoli, red peppers, spring onions, lentils and black beans combine to make a wonderful mix of sweet and sour flavours. The Plantiful Food Company's vegan ready meals are both available to order online and in 30 London-wide stores.

While ready meals may not have been the first food option to link with healthy eating, today's producers are doing something about that. Companies like Everdine cook their healthy meals from scratch, using quality ingredients that are high in protein and low in salt, fat, saturated fats and calories. The trick is in the post-cooking process. Blast-frozen immediately after cooking, this locks in the nutrients, which means that there's no need for artificial preservatives to be included in the food. It's an effective way of keeping the food as fresh and nutritious as possible.

Wiltshire Farm Foods, meanwhile, marks meals with special dietary codes, allowing

introduced a new fibre-based kind of ready meal packaging, Durapulp, which was trialed as an environmentally-friendly alternative to black plastic packaging.

KCC Packaging has also looked to natural sources with its development of Riji, a material made from natural plant fibres such as sugar cane. Perfect for the ready meal market, Riji is coated in biodegradable food-friendly material which can hold moisture-rich foods. It's a material that will stay solid when cooking in a microwave or traditional oven.

Eschewing the need for wasteful packaging, Colpac's Cookpac is an oven-safe paperboard solution that makes the cooking process as easy as possible for users. Two options are available – Same Day and Heat-Seal, the latter of which provides an extended shelf life for the food inside.

Unlike conventional plastic trays, the shape of Cookpac doesn't change during cooking. Once the meal has

“Healthy, high quality ingredients, wide variety, and innovative packaging solutions all come together to make an ideal eating solution for those who don't have the time to prepare a meal at home”

customers to select the right dish that meets their specific needs. To make life just as easy, Wiltshire Farm Foods also offers a dedicated Free From... range that's tailored to people who have particular allergies and intolerances. These meals are free from ingredients and elements such as gluten, nuts, eggs, fish and sulphites.

Packaging innovations

Ready meal packaging is more environmentally aware than ever before. Earlier this year, Huhtamaki

been cooked, it's easy to remove from the oven or microwave, thanks to Cookpac's integrated, heat-resistant handles. Once cooked, customers can open the pack without any fuss.

Ready meals have come on leaps and bounds in the past few years. Healthy, high quality ingredients, wide variety, and innovative packaging solutions all come together to make an ideal eating solution for those who don't have the time to prepare a meal at home.

IN NUMBERS

- The UK spends £4.7 billion on ready to eat convenience meals each year, according to Euromonitor
- Global DataThe value of ready prepared meals reached \$83.4 billion in 2017; that value is expected to grow to \$99.1 billion by 2021
- The UK is the biggest European market, with a recorded market value of 775,000 tonnes worth of prepared meals in 201

the high standards of ready made meals available on the market today. Customers can also choose from a selection of tasty desserts such as Belgian Chocolate Roulade (made with real, fresh dairy cream).

Samworth Brothers' range is another example of the high standards of ready meal in 2018. As well as British recipes, Samworth Brothers also offers inspiration from Italy and Asia, and to ensure

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CASH IN ON CHRISTMAS

The festive season is upon us – here's how to make sure the next few weeks go with a profitable bang

It's the busiest time for retail in general, but Christmas brings with it bumper sales for food and drink businesses. According to Kantar Worldpanel, the average household spent a record £1,054 on groceries in the 12 weeks leading up to 31st December last year. Customers even traded up to more expensive options, with a record £469 million spent on premium own label lines in December alone. Fraser McKeivitt, the consumer insight company's head of retail and consumer insight, said that while location is the most important factor in where people to shop during the rest of the year, over Christmas they'll travel further in search of specific festive products or better value.

With customers pushing the boat out when it comes to spending on their Christmas food and drink, how can retailers cash in on the festive fever? From perfect preparation to special seasonal displays, tantalising tastings and festive fun, what tricks do independent businesses use to make sure they cash in on customers' keenness to spend at Christmas time?

“Consumers want an experience”

For Dan Ritsema, who founded Cranes Drinks with identical twin brother Ben in 2012, sampling is an essential part of the company's marketing activity all year round – but even more so at Christmas. The company's portfolio includes a range of fruit ciders as well as an award-winning Cranberry & Blood Orange Liqueur. “Sampling is an essential part of Cranes Drinks marketing activity,” says Ritsema. “We have given out over 100,000

samples this year alone, and we have not even hit the Christmas period where we significantly increase our sampling activity. We find it incredibly effective, but it definitely helps having great tasting products. “I think it is imperative for young food and drink brands to undertake sampling, particularly around the festive period, when brands are showcasing their products to the absolute maximum. We consider sampling one of the most effective ways to encourage trial, without using promotional discounts which run the risk of damaging your brand if you overdo it. This is not the case with sampling – you can never overdo it to the point where it harms brand image.”

But turning up and handing out samples isn't enough, he says. “Consumers want to know every last detail about your product, from the history to the nutritional information. They want an experience. If you offer them that experience, this is where you will truly see sampling at its pinnacle. Hence why my brother and I make as many personal appearances as possible during sampling activity – consumers love meeting the founders and hearing our brand's journey. It helps develop brand loyalty, as consumers feel they are getting to know you on a personal level (and they are), but it is also great for us to get to know our customers and learn what they want.”

Sean Welsh, owner of Flourish and Prosper, an award-winning specialist wine merchant and delicatessen in Howden, East Yorkshire, agrees. “We run a big annual tasting at the beginning of

December supported by lots of our suppliers. It's mainly wine driven but we also have some spirits, beer and cheese on offer. This is a really worthwhile event that has become a big thing in the local community and really helps capture sales at Christmas. The big thing I have learnt is to create a moment to address the crowd either with a free prize draw at which I can get up and ask for the order. Doing so last year more than tripled the orders we got on the night.”

For Nila Patel, who runs an iced biscuit business, Christmas is her busiest time of year and she maximises sales with lots of tastings and in-store events in the run-up to the festive season. “We try to do more creative activities e.g. cookie decorating early in the season and in the past couple of years personalisation has been a huge trend,” says Patel, whose customers include Fortnum & Mason, Harrods and Selfridges. “But where we are restricted for space then a straightforward tasting/sampling can work really well. Customers love to engage with the owner of the brand and it can be a successful way to drive sales. Sometimes in the last week or two before Christmas – depending on how sales are going, the retailer might call us back in to do sampling to drive those last minute sales. At this point, customers are usually looking for more ready-made gifts, so creative packaging, simple things like gift tags/gift sets can work really well.”

“Smart product pairing is key”

Getting creative with displays, products and windows is important,



“The most important thing is to get your stock balance right; too much or too little is a real problem so it is an area I take a lot of time pondering”

especially during the festive season, producers and retailers agree. “Getting your window right is important particularly for Christmas,” says Sean Welsh. “I can't believe how early people start looking for ideas and it's what they have seen on display that will bring them in eventually. We try to avoid products that are particularly Christmas packaged as there is always a danger of having leftover stock. Instead we like to get items we can put together and gift wrap suitably so that these packs can be stripped down if they don't all sell.” For him, hampers are “big

business” at Christmas, and they use discounts to encourage people to get their orders in early.

Showing people how things can be paired via displays is also helpful, says Kamil Shah, artisan olive oil maker and co-founder at Olive Branch, which supplies into the independent speciality retail sector. “In the run up to Christmas, delicatessen and farm shop cheese counters will become a hive of activity. A great way to upsell is to merchandise cheeseboard condiments directly in the cheese counter so customers can see cheese and condiment pairings. We

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WAXED OR GREASEPROOF PAPERS BRANDED WITH YOUR OWN LOGO



which makes natural, sugar-free, gluten-free healthy balls, agrees. “Besides the Christmas decoration, of course, coupling products and arranging them together is one of the most often practised festive technique – for example, red wine and chocolates or gingerbread and winter tea. During the Christmas season, it is all about the appearance, rather than the product themselves, so retailers deploy all possible attention through colourful displays, Christmas lights and trees.”

For Spanish food retailer Brindisa, it’s about making sure that Christmas products complement the rest of the range. “We carefully develop our Christmas lines to complement the rest of the range, highlights always include confectionery which are great for impulse purchases,” says head of retail Mark Ashmore. “In contrast, our biggest seasonal sellers are the ham carving kits, which with an entry level price of £165 are a significant investment. Our in-store ham carving creates a theatrical display which draws people in – it’s something that Brindisa are famed for. Even in busy, tourist areas such as Borough Market, we know that this has a significant impact on sales.

“No matter how busy the store is, it’s vital to encourage consumers to try before they buy,” he says. “Cheese counter tastings are an essential part of our customer service offering and really encourages customers to purchase from us. However, for regular customers, we’re expanding the range of portioned cheeses available for those who know what

make a Sweet Olive, Fig & Almond Relish which has a waterproof label, so can be merchandised perfectly in the chiller without the label spoiling. In the weeks before Christmas, we constantly remind stockists to merchandise

jars in the chiller and they always report back positive feedback as they find it easy to upsell since customers can immediately see product combinations.”

Kalina Halatcheva, founder and managing director of Nouri,

“A great way to upsell is to merchandise cheeseboard condiments directly in the cheese counter so customers can see pairings”

they want and want to avoid the queues. We utilise local events such as Borough Market’s annual Evening of Cheese to promote our Christmas ranges and create festive displays with signage that points to gifting recipients or pricing (e.g. for him/ her, stocking fillers, luxury gifts).”

“Planning and storage are incredibly important”

When it comes to making the most of the influx of business over the Christmas period, it’s all about proper planning, says Sean Welsh. “With the way this Christmas falls shoppers will leave their food and drink shopping to the very last minute so planning and storage are going to be incredibly important. We will be doing our best to get pre-orders for cheese, but no doubt, like previous years, we will have customers rolling in at 5pm on Christmas Eve looking for

us to do a cheese board for them. Planning for Christmas starts from June onwards with lining up suppliers for tastings, and the real momentum gathers in September/October when all the Christmas offers come out. We are a small team staff-wise, but there are a few students who have worked for us previously who help boost the team come the final few days. The most important thing is to get your stock balance right; too much or too little is a real problem so it is an area I take a lot of time pondering, and having suppliers who can help right up to the last moment is important.”

For online meat retailer Farmison & Co, the preparation starts for Christmas as soon as the festive season finishes. “We start thinking about next Christmas as soon as the Christmas decorations are packed away,” says co-founder Lee Simmonds. “We analyse what has sold well and what is less popular. We listen to customer feedback. We look at changes of habits. We talk to our beloved farmers. It’s important to put together a comprehensive and, above all, great tasting range of products for our customers. Our ‘specialist’ products equally well – unusual cuts, bespoke cuts, chef prepared dishes and the like. It’s rare to be able to find heritage breed lamb, hogget and mutton in one place, for example. Then, about halfway through the year, we start to think about the rest – press, marketing, delivery etc. It’s a mammoth year-long operation, but we love it and we hope that we’re doing our bit to encourage people to eat better meat.”

“A retailer might call us back in to do sampling to drive last minute sales. At this point, customers are usually looking for more ready-made gifts, so creative packaging, simple things like gift tags/gift sets can work really well”

CHRISTMAS PLANNING:
YOU'VE GOT THE GIN. NOW FOR THE TONIC. THE ICE CAN WAIT.

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8 x 150ml Club Soda

8 x 150ml Indian Tonic Water (Perfectly Light)

8 x 150ml Bitter Lemon

8 x 150ml Ginger Ale

8 x 150ml Sicilian Lemonade

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on fine food

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Published by
Aceville Publications Ltd, 21-23 Phoenix
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Essex, CO2 8JY

Next issue available: January 2019

Subscriptions 01293 312188
specialityfood@subscriptionhelpline.co.uk
The BAR rate UK £29.25. Overseas £40.00
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THE INDEPENDENT SHOPPER

Josh Overington, head chef/owner of Le Cochon Aveugle in York, is a champion of quality ingredients simply prepared



We serve a contemporary European menu which is rooted in classical

French techniques and showcases the very best produce available to the kitchen each day. That means that our menus can differ massively from day to day, or even on the same day if we have a limited amount of a certain ingredient. It's hugely challenging but extremely exciting.

I like to do as little as possible to our produce and simply show off the ingredients we have. With that in mind, the produce we source has to be the very best and we spend a lot of time researching and finding

producers who are as passionate as we are. For example, we are very lucky to have an amazing butcher in Ryan Atkinson at R&J's Finest who's family rear and butcher our beef, which is then aged for 60 days in a Himalayan salt chamber which gives it a distinct flavour. The result is meat of a truly outstanding quality.

Yorkshire Forced Rhubarb from the Yorkshire Triangle is delicious and completely unique to us. The

quality and the sweetness makes it a very special product to work with. I'm a firm believer that when it's in season in January it's something that absolutely every chef should use.

I think it's really important to focus on quality, and if this happens to be available locally, then of course we should use it.

If there is a farmer making something better than anyone else locally then we will use them, but I would never use products sourced locally just for the sake of it, and compromise on quality.

If something is produced better further afield we will use that, as it

is more important to have a higher quality product than a product from within a certain distance from the restaurant.

R & J's Finest butchers in Ripon do an amazing job for us, whether it is ageing meat in the salt chamber, sourcing great game or getting squab of amazing consistency from France – they really are best in the business. Plus they listen and work with us to produce a better product each time, which creates a brilliant relationship.

Renowned vegetable producer Ken Holland and I have been working together for about two years now. Since I started using his vegetables, my business changed for the better! Every Tuesday, he sends me a box of what's best that week from his walled garden and indoor growing module and then I write my menu around what produce he has sent that day.

Hodgson's Fish is where I source my fish and shellfish. They have supplied my restaurant from day one.

Alysia Vasey of Yorkshire Foragers does an amazing job around my area and she has an incredible amount of knowledge. She is always bringing me great new things for me to try and it's always exciting to see what's growing in my area which I can use on my menu.

TWITTER POLL

What makes
you most nervous
about 2019?

Business
costs
14%

Climate
change
0%

Brexit
86%

SPECIALITY FOOD MAGAZINE

Inside the next issue of Speciality Food:

- Chocolate – Valentines, Mother's Day & Easter
- Scottish Food & Drink Special
- Scotland's Speciality Show Preview
- Product Sampling – Taste Direct 2019
- Refurbishment & Business Expansion



DRINKS BUYER

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COMING
SOON

Recently, I've been thinking a lot about taste. How something which one person considers the nectar of the gods can be utterly repellent to another person. Perhaps one day I'll have a chance to look into the science behind this phenomenon further (I'm sure I can't be the only one intrigued by it), but for now I'll share my entirely unscientific view: that while most tastebuds can distinguish between synthetic and the real deal, and differentiate between simple criteria such as whether a food is too salty or not salty enough, an individual's taste experience is largely determined by their experience of tasting food.

By that I don't mean consuming food products, for this can be done without much consideration at all (if you've ever been on deadline you'll know exactly what I mean), but the time spent really tasting food – experiencing it, subconsciously pinpointing what you like about it,

what you're not so keen on, and taking time to understand what's gone on behind the scenes. This is easy to say as someone who has judged food and drink products for a living, but how can you get Joe Bloggs and his wife appreciating what's going on behind the scenes in what they're eating and drinking?

It's worth bearing this in mind when it comes to running tasting sessions in your shop – whether a brand ambassador is in your store handing out samples of your wares, or you're running an out-of-hours pairing event, for example. Provide information and tasting notes using point of sale material, or, if

you can spare a staff member for a few hours, have them connecting with customers at the display to tell them the story behind the product in question – even tasting and experience the food or drink with the customer. This may seem an indulgent use of your staff's time when time and resources are of the

essence, but customers (and the producer you're promoting) will appreciate the extra effort and I can almost guarantee this approach will lead to additional sales.

We know that shoppers today – with exceptions, of course – are more conscious than ever of the ethical, social and environmental

ramifications of the items they choose to consume, food or otherwise. Let's keep the education flowing and appreciation of good food made by good people high.

I'm as guilty as the next person of mindless consumption – in fact, I think it's increasingly common in this fast-living world – but by making the effort to slow down, breathe and take a moment to really appreciate what we're eating and selling, we'll be doing the producers and foods themselves justice... not to mention instill a bit more understanding into our customers, too.

TALKING SHOP

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“ We know that shoppers today are more conscious than ever of the ethical, social and environmental ramifications of the items they choose to consume, food or otherwise. Let's keep the education flowing and appreciation of good food made by good people high ”

5 MINUTES WITH... JEREMY PANG

TV chef and founder of School Of Wok

WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING IF YOU WEREN'T IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?

If I had a choice – a tech job where I could work from home for the most part and not have to worry about pleasing thousands of customers! However, if it's a question about my history, I would probably still be stuck in a corporate marketing job in an industry I didn't care about!

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB?

My first ever job was for a mouthguard company. I used to wake up at 4am, drive to Hatfield and spend eight hours removing sticky mouth guards from their molds... lovely.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

Aside from good food, the hard working, passionate, people who enjoy their work and don't take no as an answer – i.e. the people behind the good food.

WHAT'S THE WORST JOB YOU'VE DONE?

Marketing for a very well known electronics brand – to this day, I will never understand or share their values, but ironically I hold them eternally grateful because I would never have got to where I am today without working in such a terrible, hierarchical environment. My best learning during that time was how NOT to run my business.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PART OF YOUR JOB?

Variety and people. I get to meet some incredible people – successful and quirky, and every day is completely different in my job.

AND YOUR LEAST FAVOURITE?

VAT Receipts... just ask our accountant. I'm terrible with my receipts – my back pocket is full all



the time because of receipts piling up.

TEA OR COFFEE?

Ask my team – they know the score. Coffee makes me go mad, tea makes me feel great. Builders brew, splash of milk and since last month just 1/2 a sugar please... unless I'm on holiday.

HOW ABOUT THE FOOD INDUSTRY – IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE TO CHANGE?

Wages (especially in the restaurant world). Kitchen attitude (from restaurateurs to head chefs through to the bottom). Good food should come from the heart. If you take the best local restaurants around the world, they are often run by passionate, friendly, local chefs and people – why can't every kitchen be run like that?

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR LAST SUPPER?

I used to say steak and chips, but as I grow older, I get closer to my roots. I've realised that Chinese food is great because it lends itself to feasting!

WHAT'S YOUR MOTTO?

A few years back, I made a New Years resolution for the first time: If I have an idea that I know will guarantee to benefit myself, my loved ones or anyone around me, I do it straight away. No thinking twice.

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST THING THAT YOU'VE EVER EATEN?

Terrapins foot – when I was a kid in China on holiday. Yes, I freaked out.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK?

May be a little cliché for a chef – but *Kitchen Confidential*.

SWEET OR SAVOURY?

Savoury, topped off with sweet.

DIARY DATES

November

8th
REAL ITALIAN WINE & FOOD
London
therealitalianwine.co.uk

14th–15th
THE EUROPEAN PIZZA & PASTA SHOW
Olympia, London
pizzapastashow.com

16th–19th
TASTE OF LONDON
Tobacco Dock, London
london.tastefestivals.com

20th–22nd
FOOD MATTERS LIVE
ExCeL, London
foodmatterslive.com

29th–2nd
BBC GOOD FOOD SHOW WINTER
NEC, Birmingham
bbcgoodfoodshow.com

January

7th–9th
BELLAVITA
RAI Amsterdam
bellavita.com

13th–15th
FOOD EMPORIUM AT TOP DRAWER
Olympia, London
topdrawer.co.uk

13th–15th
WINTER FANCY FOOD SHOW
Moscone Center, San Francisco
specialtyfood.com

20th–22nd
SCOTLAND'S SPECIALITY FOOD SHOW
SECC, Glasgow
scotlandsspecialityfoodshow.com

TRIED & TESTED



HOLLY, EDITOR

DORSET SEA SALT CO.

All home cooks would agree that salt is a must-have in their arsenal, and discerning cooks would argue

that it's worth investing in something a cut above standard table salt to make their food really sing. Enter Dorset Salt Co. Offering an array of quality, flavourful salts – from versatile classics like Natural, Garlic and Chilli to exciting variations such as Beetroot Apple and Tomato, Olive & Basil – this range is not only attractive, varied and high quality, but perfect for gifting too.
dorsetseasalt.co.uk



RENEGADE & LONGTON, ELDERFLOWER BLUSH

My passions are many and varied, but when a product comes along which ticks a lot of my boxes I'm an instant fan. So when I came across Renegade & Longton, a Victoriana-styled (tick) brand of sparkling wine (tick), inspired by Oscar Wilde (tick) and combining fruity English flavours such as rhubarb, elderflower and berries, I couldn't help but swoon. A great alternative to the usual sparklers during party season, and something any discerning drinker would love to have under the tree come Christmas.
renegadeandlongton.com

WILKIN & SONS COCONUT CARAMEL

As a longtime lover of salted caramel, for years I've been under the impression that – done well – this timeless combination of sweet and savoury can't be beaten. Then I tried Wilkin & Son's Coconut Caramel. Perfectly balanced with a nutty edge, it's incredibly versatile (not to mention moreish) – I've eaten it from the jar, dipped biscuits into it and used it to add extra indulgence to homemade brownies. Bliss.
tiptree.com



NOBLE HIMALAYAN SALTED CACAO

I'm partial to a hot chocolate but familiar with the slight pang of guilt following the indulgence – which means that Noble's Himalayan Salted Cacao is right up my street. Not only is it delicious (who could resist the blend of chocolate and subtle spices?) but it's filled with enough nutritional powerhouses that rather than being a slightly naughty treat it's as healthy as a superfood-packed smoothie. Not cheap, but a healthy indulgence – and who couldn't do with more of them to brighten their day?
madebynoble.earth





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